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A HISTORY

of the

Ashe County, North Carolina
and New River, Virginia
Baptist Associations

By

J. F. FLETCHER



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REV. J. F. FLETCHER AND WIFE, LOUISA BARKER FLETCHER

PREFACE

My father has asked that I write an introduction to his "History of the Ashe (N. C.) and the New River (Va.) Baptist Associations." Since I can add nothing to the story he has told, I think I can best serve the reader by setting down here a few facts about the author. Since 1876, when he became an ordained minister in Ashe County, he has been so close to men and events in the country he writes about that he found it difficult to tell the story without bringing in the personal pronoun "I" too much, a thing that worried him no little. Reading his history, I think he has shown a fine restraint and has exhibited again the modesty and self-effacement that has characterized his life since he was a boy.

I have known for several months that I would have to do this bit of writing but now that I am called upon for it, I find myself as poorly prepared to do it as I was months ago. As I sit facing a blank sheet of paper, my mind is crowded with a thousand pictures of the man, a thousand aspects of his life as father, minister, husband, neighbor, citizen—all clamoring for recognition, all worthy of a place in this brief sketch of his life.

If I had to choose one word to designate his character I would choose the word "father," because for nearly sixty years he has been father—kind, sympathetic, helpful, trusting, loving—not only to his own children but to thousands of people in his beloved mountains. Nobody ever went to him seeking spiritual or material aid without receiving it in the fullest measure he was able to bestow. I think he is the kind of father that Christ's earthly father must have been, for when Christ sought to give mortals some conception of the character and attributes of God, the word he used was "father."

James Floyd Fletcher was born Nov. 11, 1858, the son of John and Barbara Johnston Fletcher. He was a youngster of energy and ambition and at the age of 14 left home and served an apprenticeship as a printer. He returned home after two years and attended school near Jefferson, Ashe County, N. C., and at the age of 17 taught school. It was while teaching that he began the work of the ministry, to which he had been called of God.

I have in my possession an old diary of his. It is not complete but there are paragraphs and pages that are priceless to me. Under date of Jan. 9, 1876, this is written:

"I organized my first prayer-meeting at Pugh's school house in connection with Thomas Warren and Emmett Stump. Neither of us 20 years of age."

There is the further record that the prayer-meeting was continued for three months and there were "fifty-nine conversions from its immediate influence."

In the following April, at old Bethel Church, in Ashe County, he was licensed to preach. I have the original certificate, which was signed by Aaron Johnston, pastor of the church, and E. C. Faw, clerk, and reads as follows:

"North Carolina,
"Ashe County,
"April the 8th, 1876.

"We the Baptists of Christ's Church at Bethel now in conference, do grant Brother J. F. Fletcher the liberty and permission to pray, exhort or take a text and preach the Gospel.

"Done by order of the Church."

On April 30, 1876, at old Mt. Pleasant Church, near the edge of Watauga County, he preached his first sermon and his text was John 3:14-15:

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life."

In this sermon the boy preacher set up not only the mark of his high calling in Christ Jesus but his standard of living as well, because I can truthfully say that in all of my experience, which has been varied and extensive, I have never known a human being who more faithfully and unswervingly "lifted up" Christ in his life and his preaching and teaching. There are thousands of good people in North Carolina and Virginia, whose lives he touched and blessed, who will vouch for what I say.

In his diary there follows a list of the next 209 sermons which he preached, the place, time and text. He was ordained to the ministry at Bethel Church on December 10, 1876, one month after his 18th birthday. At that time he had averaged one sermon every three days from the date he had been licensed to preach, showing real activity on the part of the boy preacher.

He began his first pastorate at White Top Baptist Church on February 3, 1877, and from that time he was continuously in the pastorate until he resigned as pastor of Southside Baptist Church in High Point, N. C., on April 6, 1924.

On December 26, 1876, he was married to Louisa Barker, daughter of Alfred and Kate Blevins Barker, who was his faithful help-meet for nearly 47 years. She died June 3, 1923, while he was pastor of Southside Baptist Church in High Point, N. C. To them were born twelve children, of whom nine lived to manhood and womanhood, these being:

A. L. Fletcher, J. V. Fletcher and A. J. Fletcher, of Raleigh, N. C.; Mrs. W. R. Absher, of North Wilkesboro, N. C.; Herbert S. Fletcher and Mrs. E. W. Bean, of High Point, N. C.; Charles F. Fletcher, of Kirksville, Mo.; Mrs. J. M. Daniel (deceased) and Mrs. J. P. Bingham, of Lexington, N. C.

It was during the year following his resignation as pastor of Southside Baptist Church in High Point, N. C., that he began to gather material for this history. He had in his possession many valuable note-books and manuscripts and, better than any other person, he knew where others could be found, and it was to him a labor of love to ferret them out and delve into them. He spent many happy months visiting old friends in the mountains and getting material together for this book. Being at that time 66 years of age, and not in the best of health, he did not expect to return to the ministry, but God had willed otherwise and he was again called to the pastorate of Young's Chapel Church, to which he had been called thrice before and since February 1, 1925, he has been pastor of that splendid church at Kindrick, Va., and chaplain of the fine school there, doing the best work of his life.

On December 17, 1925, he was married to Mrs. Ada Willett, of Gloucester County, Virginia, a fine Christian woman who had come to Kindrick to assist in the management of "Oak Hill Baptist Academy." She is an outstanding leader of Baptist women in Virginia and under her leadership the Women's Missionary Union of the New River Baptist Association has been a "banner" union for six years. She has been a valuable assistant to her husband.

And here I close. If the reader thinks I have exaggerated the virtues of my father and offended against the canons of good taste, I am truly sorry, but I have looked over what I have writ-

ten and I can find no exaggeration. In fact, I am amazed at my restraint. When I was just a little boy I remember watching my father in action on a memorable occasion and thinking, with an uprush of pride that left me dizzy, that my dad was the greatest man in the world. Nearly forty years have passed since that day and I still think so.

A. L. FLETCHER.

Raleigh, N. C., Feb. 1, 1935.

A HISTORY OF THE Ashe County, North Carolina, and New River, Virginia, Baptist Associations

By J. F. FLETCHER.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

Ashe County, North Carolina, originally including Alleghany County and part of Watauga County, was formed in 1799 from "that portion of Wilkes County lying west of the extreme height of the Appalachian mountains." Ashe is in the extreme north-western corner of the State of North Carolina and is bounded on the north by Grayson County, Virginia, and on the west by Tennessee. Watauga County lies to the south and Wilkes touches the county on the south and southeast. Alleghany County bounds it on the east.

Wheeler's "History of North Carolina," Vol. 1, page 27, says that "Ashe County was settled about 1755." It is extremely doubtful if any permanent settlements were made in Ashe County as early as 1755. Today in North Carolina Ashe, Alleghany and Watauga Counties are spoken of as the "Lost Provinces" because of their lack of railroad connection with the rest of the State and back in those early days, 175 years ago, this same territory was spoken of as "No Man's Land."

It was believed among the people of North Carolina and among the people of other states as well, that the North Carolina line in the northwestern section of the State followed the crest of the Blue Ridge, though no other state claimed the territory. No state actually exercised authority over this territory for many years.

In David Wood's "History of the New River Settlements" it is stated that the first people to settle in Ashe County located on Helton Creek, a tributary of New River, which has its origin in Ashe County and flows through Virginia and West Virginia and on into the Ohio. In the year 1770, David Helton, for

whom the creek was named, William Wallin and William McLean visited this section on a hunting trip and were so pleased with it that they returned in 1771 and brought their families with them. They established a settlement on Helton Creek. Many years ago, when I was a little boy, I saw the house where David Helton was said to have lived.

Helton and his companions did not remain long in this section, but moved on westward with the tide that was even then carrying adventurous spirits to Kentucky and to sections further west. Following the Heltons, Wallins and McLeans, other families from the lowlands drifted into the same section and into other parts of Ashe County and moved on, leaving no trace except here and there a stream or a mountain was named for one of them.

Since I have set out to record one phase of the religious history of Ashe County and of the territory over in Grayson County, Virginia, adjacent to it, it would be well to record that David Helton and his associates were Presbyterians and that the majority of the others who settled in Ashe County shortly after were either Presbyterians or Episcopalians. Probably the first organized group of Baptists in this territory was the Baptist Church at Mulberry Fields, which church was formed from Dutchman's Creek Church, situated at what is now the town of Wilkesboro, county seat of Wilkes County. I do not know when the Mulberry Fields Baptist Church came into existence, though it must have been several years prior to the beginning of the Revolutionary War. General William Lenoir, famous statesman and soldier of North Carolina's early days, who moved into this western section of the State from Halifax County and established a home near Wilkesboro, found this church in existence when he settled there. Later he moved on into what is now Caldwell County and built a home near the present town of Lenoir, which was named for him. This house was built in 1788 and is still standing.

He came to Wilkes County, at that time a part of Surry County, in 1770 or 1771. In a sketch which he wrote in 1824 for a Mr. Ramsay, who was engaged in writing a history of Tennessee, appears the following:

“Surry was frontier country in 1775, including Wilkes, Ashe and Burke, and extending to the Mississippi River. It was thinly inhabited being an entire wilderness.

“Then the Mulberry Fields Meeting House was the only place of worship in said county. It was built by the Baptists and very large congregations of different persuasions of people attended their meetings. The gentlemen generally dressed in hunting shirts, short breeches, leggins and mocasins. The ladies in linsy (flax) petticoats and bed gowns and often without shoes in Summer. Some had bonnets and bed gowns made of calico, but generally of linsy, and some of them had on men’s hats. Their hair was commonly clubbed.

“Men generally had long hair and wore it either in a cue or clubbed. Once at a large meeting I noticed there were but two ladies that had on long gowns. One of them was laced genteely and the body of the other was open and the tail thereof drawn up and tucked in her apron or coat string. They appeared very orderly and devout at meetings, and going to their homes you would find them living well and they would treat you with great hospitality, giving you plenty of pork, beef, bear meat and venison; also milk, butter, cheese and honey. The buffaloes and elk were then chiefly destroyed. And when you left them, as there were no public roads and few plain paths, the men would go with you to show you the way until you could thus be accommodated by some other person. You might travel hundreds of miles and not meet with any person who would receive any pay.”

Not all of this, of course, has reference to our story, but I have quoted it at length for the reason that it gives interesting side-lights on the times and the customs and the distinguished writer was plainly an admirer of these sturdy Baptist pioneers. He goes on to relate how these fine people denied themselves all of the luxuries of the day in order to bring the war for independence to a successful termination, the men serving faithfully and bravely in the armies and the women working in their fields and carrying on as courageously at home as their men-folks did in the army.

The Fox Creek Baptist Church, constituted in 1782, was located in Grayson County, Virginia. It was probably the next organized body of Baptists in this territory. Authorities are agreed that it was the first Baptist church in Grayson County.

The next church of which I can find record was the Three Forks Baptist Church, in what is now Watauga County, which was organized in 1790. There is stored away in the vaults of the Bank of Watauga at Boone, N. C., the book of minutes of this fine old church, which still exists and from which a great Baptist association has been named. The book is well preserved and bears this title:

“A Book Containing the faith (as may be seen in the Covenant) & Conduct of the Baptist Church of Jesus Christ in Wilkes County, North Carolina State, New River Three Forks Settlement which ye Church being Constituted November ye 6 Day in the Year of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ 1790 by the following Brethren, viz.: Richard Green, Daniel Eggers, Elender Green, William Miller, Mary Miller, Phebe Eggers.

“At which time Received & Added by Experience and Baptism, Sarah Coleman & Lois Eggers also Sister Lidia Counsel by Letter also Bro'r Benjamin Cutbirth by Experience. Also agreed to hold our Stational Meetings in the first Saturday in each Month.”

Watauga was at that time part of Wilkes County and as will be related elsewhere, other churches had been constituted prior to this, but they were not in the part of Wilkes lying west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. This famous range of mountains served to cut off all of that territory lying west of it from Wilkes County and the remainder of North Carolina and ally it with Virginia. Naturally the Baptist churches in this territory allied themselves with Virginia Baptists and they remained so allied for a hundred years.

In Semple's "History of the Baptists in Virginia" he tells of the organization of a Baptist church in Grayson County known as the "North Fork of New River Church" in 1796. This church was undoubtedly in Ashe County, North Carolina, as no part of the north fork of New River touches Grayson County anywhere. All of it lies in Ashe County. The church had thirteen members and was, I believe, the first Baptist church in Ashe County. Meadow Creek Baptist Church, in the lower end of Grayson County, was also organized in 1796.

The Methodists were the next organized group to become established in this territory. I do not know exactly when they

came to Ashe County. Daniel Burkett, of Jefferson, N. C., who was born in 1815 and lived to be 100 years and 7 months old, told me that the first Methodist "class" was organized at the home of George ("Paddy") Bowers, who lived where the town of West Jefferson now stands. Daniel Burkett remembered that it was organized in a cherry grove at the Bowers home. He was just a boy at the time, but he remembered the details of the meeting. The circuit rider who organized the class was James Hurley, a great-great-grandfather of Rev. D. P. Hurley, noted Methodist minister of today. James Hurley later died on a preaching tour in Tennessee and was buried in the Wills graveyard in Johnson County, Tennessee.

Thirty years ago at her home on Elk Creek in Grayson County, "Aunt" Betsy Delp, then a very old lady, told me that James Hurley was the first Methodist preacher to come to Grayson County. She heard him preach for the first time when she was 10 years old and she remembered his text. It was Proverbs 30:26.

"The conies are but a feeble folk, yet they make their houses in the rocks."

From her story and from that of Daniel Burkett and from what I have learned from others, I think that I am safe in saying that the Methodists arrived in this territory some time between 1820 and 1825.

Getting back to the Baptists, with whose story we are more particularly concerned, it may be recorded that we find in the old records mention of other churches of which we know nothing except that they once existed in this section. With the close of the Revolutionary War and the lessening of the dangers of frontier life, a steady stream of immigrants had set in and Ashe County, then Wilkes, attracted a multitude of home-seekers. Then, as now, its beauties were alluring and the stories that hardy adventurers had carried back to the settlements in the low-lands before the Revolution, had been treasured in the hearts of the people during the long years of the war and when peace came, they moved over into Ashe with their families and their flocks and herds and settled along New River and along Helton, Grassy and Horse Creeks.

While we are interested primarily in the religious development of the section in general and the Baptist part in that development in particular, it will not be amiss to take note of a

political matter that comparatively few people know anything about. I refer to the formation of the State of Frankland (or Franklin) which was established in 1784 by John Sevier. This ill-fated state had its capital at Jonesborough, now in the State of Tennessee. The inhabitants of Ashe County at that time considered themselves subjects of the State of Franklin and many of the oldest records of Ashe County, including deeds and land grants, are on record today at Jonesborough, Tenn. These records must have been made between 1784 and 1788, for the State of Franklin became extinct after a tumultuous and unhappy existence of four years.

CHAPTER II.

YADKIN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION.

In 1786 the Strawberry Baptist Association, of Virginia, had thirteen churches in North Carolina. These churches, with one in Virginia, formed a sort of sub-association, holding meetings every year, but reporting all acts and proceedings to the mother association for approval or disapproval. This arrangement may have existed prior to 1786, though I have no positive proof of it, but I do know that it existed then. In 1790 these churches petitioned the Strawberry Association to release them and permit them to form a separate association and their petition was granted.

As soon as this petition was granted, immediate steps were taken to perfect the new association and its first meeting was held on August 28, 29 and 30, 1790, at Eaton's Meeting House in Rowan County, North Carolina. The introductory sermon was preached by Elder Andrew Baker. Text, I Cor. 1:30.

Elder George McNeill was chosen moderator and Stephen Wood clerk. Letters were presented from fourteen churches, as follows:

Beaver Creek, in Wilkes County, with John Barlow, James Franklin and John Sevier as delegates.

New River, in Wilkes County, Theophilis Irwin and Peter Whitehead, delegates.

North Fork, Wilkes County, John Vannoy and James Bumgard, delegates.

Briar Creek, Wilkes County, George McNeill, Andrew Baker, Ben Martin and Stephen Poe, delegates.

South Fork of Roaring River, Wilkes County, William Hammond, Spencer Adams and William Morgan, delegates.

Mitchell River, Wilkes County, Barnet Franklin, and William Romley, delegates.

Head of Yadkin, Wilkes County, John Durham and James Coffey, delegates.

Roaring River, Wilkes County, Thomas Lawrence and Thomas Johnson, delegates.

Timber Ridge, Rowan County, John Eaton and Andrew Hunt, delegates.

Jersey, Rowan County (now Davidson), Abraham Lewis and John Hollis, delegates.

Grassy Knob, Iredell County, Lazarus Whitehead, Moses Sanders and William Lunsford, delegates.

Catawba, Burke County, Cleveland Coffey, and William Bradshaw, delegates.

Hunting Creek, Surry County, William Petty, William Cook and William McBride, delegates.

Rye Valley, Smythe County, Virginia, Benjamin Johns, delegate.

These fourteen churches had 370 members, the first three named being in what is now Ashe County. If you will get your map of North Carolina and take a look at the territory represented by these fourteen churches, it will astonish you. The difficulties of attending a meeting of such an association, with churches so widely separated, would be considered insurmountable even in this day of improved roads. These hardy pioneers thought nothing of riding for days and days, over trails barely passable for horseback riders, in order to meet together in their associations and lay plans for the extension of the kingdom.

I have before me the minutes of the second meeting of this association, which was named the Yadkin Association. This meeting was held with Briar Creek Church, in Wilkes County, in 1791, and all of the churches were represented except Rye Valley. One church, Dutchman's Creek, the date of whose organization we do not know, with Andrew Hunt and John Irwin as delegates, was admitted. It is interesting to note, in passing, that Mulberry Fields Church, to which I have referred previously, was formed from this old Dutchman's Creek Church.

To many the statistics which I have just given may not be interesting, but in view of subsequent events I feel that the preservation of the names of these splendid men is important and worth while. No association up to that time and none since, in my humble judgment, has possessed a larger vision, manifested more zeal, shown more wisdom than the Yadkin Baptist Association. No association has ever confronted greater difficulties, nor succeeded more gloriously.

In the minutes of their first meeting, which began at 10:00 o'clock on Monday, August 30, 1790, there occurs the following language:

“Met according to appointment and after Divine service proceeded to business.

“First, application that the Clerk furnish Brother Cook, Brother Whitehead and Brother McNeill with letters of recommendation to travel on in the name of the Association.

“2. That there be an Association Fund prepared and for this purpose appointed Brother Barlow, Brother Eaton and Brother Martin as collectors of the same and that Brother Wood be trustee for that purpose.”

It may be seen that our State, Home and Foreign Mission Boards of today and our whole financial system are simply an enlargement of the missionary plans of the Yadkin Baptist Association, laid in 1790, involving more men, more money and a larger territory. These splendid Baptists, with their eyes set on the future, builded better than they knew. Many of them lived to see the Baptist State Convention, organized 40 years later, adopt their plans and fit them to the larger needs of the State.

From this beginning, so filled with the missionary spirit, the Baptists began to spread abroad and to multiply and there has been no let-up through the years. Today in the same territory embraced by the Yadkin Association, there are twenty-two Baptist associations, with thousands of members. Within nine years from its organization, the Yadkin Association was able to give off enough churches to form the Mountain Baptist Association, with ten churches and eight ministers. The following were the churches:

Rye Valley, New River, North Fork of New River, Fish River, South Fork of Roaring River, Beaver Creek, Head of Yadkin, Cedar Island, Three Forks and St. Clair's Bottom. The first and last-named were in Virginia. Cedar Island later came to be known as Fox Creek Church.

Every one of these old churches became a center of missionary effort. Located at strategic points, they began to reach out into the country surrounding them, bringing into their membership the leading men and women of the time and from every one of these churches, two and three and even more churches grew and were set apart for the service of God. At this time, between 1790 and 1799, no other denomination was represented in all this vast territory by an organized church, association, conference or presbytery, and few of them had any preacher in the territory. Occasionally, a Methodist minister made his appear-

ance in this territory for a brief period of time, but only for a brief period.

The zeal of those early Baptist ministers, McNeill, Baker and others, has scarcely been equalled in the annals of our church. The world has seen no such religious crusaders since the saints of the early days "went everywhere, preaching the word." These men did not wait until a "living" was assured to them. They did not wait until they found out if there were good roads and a good church building, with a comfortable parsonage, and good schools for their children. They did not even stop to inquire if the people among whom they were going could house them comfortably, give them a featherbed to sleep on and provide ham, eggs and chicken for breakfast. Believing in the promises of the Master, they took no thought of the morrow, but responded to God's call, going wheresoever there was human need.

It is difficult for us to picture in our minds the conditions faced by these heroic men of God. Accustomed as we are to good roads and easy communication, we think nothing of a journey of a hundred miles or more in three hours and it is difficult for us to realize that in those days the preacher reached his scattered congregations by travelling afoot or on horseback, over devious trails made by Indians and hunters. He found his people living in log huts, usually of one room, and subsisting on rye bread, potato soup and bacon, varied occasionally with game from the forests. At that time, no corn was grown in the sparse and straggly clearings for the reason that no variety of corn had been developed that would ripen in this territory during the comparative short growing season.

CHAPTER III.

THE MOUNTAIN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION.

From the date of its organization in 1799, the Mountain Baptist Association, coming into existence the same year that Ashe County was cut off from Wilkes County and established as a separate county, experienced satisfactory growth and development, adding new churches almost every year and increasing constantly in membership. I am unable to follow the development in detail for the reason that no minutes of the association's meetings are available until 1838. We know that the association's growth had been marvelous, for in 1840 it was strong enough to give off enough churches to form the Three Forks Association and still have 24 churches left, with more than 1,000 members. From the stories that have come down to us from our fathers and mothers, we know that many strong preachers had been called of God to labor in this field and that their labors had been abundantly blessed.

It was during this period that the preaching against missions by Daniel Parker, who came to the fore in 1814, by Alexander Campbell, in 1821 and by Osborne in the Piedmont section of North Carolina several years later, began to spread over this territory and win adherents. On page three of the minutes of the Mountain Association for 1838, there is this request from Bear Creek Church:

“Our church unanimously requests that the Association will not meddle with the missionary business so as to break any fellowship or make any division among the churches.”

The association appointed a committee to consider this request and make report on it, the committee consisting of Elders Drewry Senter, and Brazille McBride, and Brethren E. Vanover, D. Tinsley and J. Calloway. The committee made this report:

“We have no authority over the churches and individuals but in answer to the request of several churches we drop correspondence with all associations at present and agree to renew it upon the following terms:

“That is, we agree to advise our churches and do advise them, to deal with any member of their body who may have

trespassed against them by joining any of the institutions of the day and continue in them, causing divisions which we believe to be contrary to the whole tenor of God's word, which directs us as followers of Him, to keep the unity of the Spirit in bonds of peace, as also contrary to the principles which we as Baptists have heretofore lived under and contended for;

"Therefore, brethren, should you advise your churches to use gospel labors to detect those who are sowing seeds of discord among brethren by advocating the institutions of the day, or should you use any other means agreeable to the Word of God, to put these things from among you, we can walk together and still correspond with you as heretofore."

The report was concurred in but not without much argument and much bitterness. Two men who were present, Wiley G. Young, of Grayson County, Virginia, and Alfred Barker, of Ashe County, told me that there was a stirring debate, in which many speakers lost their tempers, and spoke harsh words. One minister, a man of commanding influence, speaking in favor of the report, exclaimed:

"We are anti-missionary!"

As far as my knowledge goes, this is the first time that the term "anti-missionary" appeared in the annals of western North Carolina Baptists. Later the Baptist hosts of the State and, indeed, of the whole country were to split upon this issue and the rift, started at the meeting of the Mountain Association in 1838, grew wider and wider with the passage of the years. The associations with which the Mountain Association had been in correspondence up to this time were notified of the action of the association. The following is a copy of the letter sent to these associations, this having been addressed to the Briar Creek Baptist Association, a sister association indeed, for it had been formed from the old Yadkin Association:

"North Carolina, Ashe County,
"September 1st, 1838.

"The Mountain Association to her Sister, the Briar Creek:
"Very Dear Brethren:—

"Feeling desirous to keep up a correspondence with you, we submit to you the conditions that we are willing still to correspond with you. That is, we have dropped corre-

spondence with all associations and agree to revive it upon the following terms, viz.: To advise the churches to deal with any member of their body who may join any of the institutions of the day.

(Signed) Tobias Long, Moderator.

“R. Gentry, Clerk.”

This offer of correspondence and its conditions, did not meet with favor in the Briar Creek Association and the proposition was unanimously rejected in regular conference.

That this dissension was not confined to Ashe County is shown by a statement in Dr. B. F. Riley's "History of the Baptists of the South," page 173, to the effect that disorder reigned in the Baptist churches of the South until about 1836 or 1838, this period being generally known as the period of the "great split."

"By this time," says Dr. Riley, "the anti-mission forces had become very hostile and insisted upon withdrawal from all churches and associations which favored missions. This cleavage was most fortunate. The separation was the dawn of a better day for the Missionary Baptists of the South."

Dr. Riley goes on to say that the histories of the two divisions of the Baptist family, is most instructive. The missionary branch has grown in enlightenment and culture, has founded and maintained great institutions of learning, has established a great and reputable religious press, has produced an advanced type of scholarship and has planted its churches in every community in the South. The other has kept itself in the remote rural sections and has made almost no progress.

Immediately after the association had adopted the resolution dropping correspondence with other associations, a request was read from Three Forks Church for the association to set aside a day for fasting and prayer, no particular cause specified, and it was "agreed to set apart the third Lord's Day in September next" with a request that our "sister associations join us." Apparently, they overlooked the very important fact that only a few minutes previously they had severed relations with all other associations and had no sister associations to which they could appeal.

At this meeting the Reddies River Church asked for and was granted a letter of dismissal and the association adjourned to meet the following year with Old Fields Church, with Elder Calvin Jones to preach the introductory sermon.

Attached to the minutes of this association is a circular letter by James Vannoy, on the subject of "Watchfulness." It is an unusually able paper and shows that the writer was a man of real ability.

Here occurs a break in my file of the minutes of the Mountain Association and I am unable to follow in detail the development of the work in the years intervening between 1838 and 1845. We know, however, that there was very real progress in spite of the step backward that had been taken when the association went on record as opposing missions, for in 1845, when the association met with Grassy Creek Church in Ashe County, we find that it still has twenty-four churches and that its membership is 1,134, despite the fact that in 1840 it had given off enough churches to form the Three Forks Association.

At this session, which began on September 5, 1845, the introductory sermon was preached by Elder Jordan Ashley, from the text Rev. 15:3. Elder Drury Senter was elected moderator and Alexander McMillan clerk. Two new churches, Knob Fork and Cross Roads, were received at this session and contributions, sent up from the churches, amounting to \$25.00, were distributed as follows:

For services of clerk, \$3.00; paid correspondents, \$15.00; printing minutes, \$10.00. Three dollars had been left over from the previous year, making a total expenditure of \$28.00. It was customary in those days, and had long been the custom, to appoint as "correspondents" certain brethren, usually preachers, to visit other associations and convey to them a message of good will and friendliness and at the next meeting of the association pay them for the work. This was kept up for many years. I recall having seen it done but once and that was in 1875.

The 1846 session of the association was held with Mulberry Church and Elder Drury Senter preached the introductory sermon from the text, Matt. 6:33. Elder Drury Senter was again elected moderator and Alexander McMillan clerk. All of the twenty-five churches of the association were reported as represented and one new church, Crooked Creek, with 24 members, was received.

That the need of preachers was becoming acute in this fast-growing field is shown by the following entry in the minutes of this session:

“Then took up the requests of several churches in our union for the supply of the ministry in the destitute churches in our association bounds, and after considering same, came to the conclusion that the churches destitute of the ministry should call any of the preaching brethren of their choice to labor for them, and that the churches so calling shall make suitable compensation to him, or them, for their labor.”

This suggestion, filled with rugged common sense and honesty, shows the stuff these early Baptist leaders were made of. They believed that every church should bear its own burdens and they did not hesitate to say so in plain words. At the next session of the association, held with Knob Fork Church in Grayson County, Virginia, they found it necessary to repeat this advice to Fox Creek and Saddle Creek churches.

At this session, which began on September 3, 1847, the introductory sermon was preached by Elder Tobias Long, from the text, I Cor. 7:9, 10:11. Elder Long was chosen moderator and Alexander McMillan clerk.

There came up at this session the matter of dividing the Mountain Association and after much consideration it was decided to make the crest of the Blue Ridge the dividing line and that “Cranberry, Union and Piney Fork churches, on the west side of the Ridge, have their choice as to which they shall attach themselves.” It was decided that a convention of the churches set apart for the new association would be called to meet with Roaring River Church on Friday before the fourth Sunday in October, 1847, for the purpose of organizing. This convention was held in accordance with this act of the Mountain Association and thus the Roaring River Baptist Association came into being, an offspring of the Mountain Association.

The 1848 session of the Mountain Association was held with Piney Creek Church, beginning on September 22, with the introductory sermon by Elder George Douglass. Elder Drury Senter was chosen moderator and Alexander B. McMillan clerk. Only nineteen churches were represented at this session, owing to the formation of the Roaring River Association the previous year.

On page two of the minutes of this session appears the following significant paragraph:

“This Association, from the best information she is able to get, has come to the conclusion that in the reception of some churches into our union, we have set our doors too wide.”

There follows after this another paragraph that would as well be omitted, were it not for the prominent part taken by the subject of it, Elder R. Jacks, in the history of the Baptists of this section:

“The Association then appointed John Gambill, John Reeves and Andrew McMillan a committee to review and revise all of the acts and resolutions of this Association from the year 1836 until the present year in relation to Richard Jacks and report them to the next Association.”

At the meeting next year, with Little River Church, in Ashe County, this committee was excused for not complying with the directions of the association, but the following entry in the minutes indicates that Elder Jacks was not at that time in good standing with his brethren of the Mountain Association:

“A query from Little River Church: Is it right to receive a member who has belonged to a missionary institution or church, who was baptized by Richard Jacks or Stephen Ross without being baptized by one of our ordained ministers?”

“Answer: Nay.”

The 1849 session began on September 21st, with the introductory sermon by Elder Nathaniel Senter from the text, John 5:39. Elder Drury Senter was elected moderator and Alexander B. McMillan clerk.

At this session, in an effort to try to appease those who were crying for the services of preachers, the association attempted to put in operation a plan for the distribution of the ministers of the association among the churches. A committee composed of John Baker, John Gambill, James Dickey and Alexander B. McMillan was named to divide the ministers of the associations and arrange for regular appointments to cover the entire association. It was planned to print these appointments in the back of the association's minutes, so that everybody would know about them. The churches were instructed to send up to the next meeting of the association such sums of money as they desired

to pay the preachers for their labors and also to send letters stating whether they approved the plan or not. The committee did its work and apportioned the fourteen ministers of the associations among the churches, giving date of appointments for each. This list shows the following preachers in the association:

David Cook, Drury Senter, Solomon Stamper, L. Grimsley, Nathaniel Senter, T. Carr, Enoch Reeves, George Douglass, H. Vannoy, Z. Sawyer, T. Woody, R. Kilby, J. Briniger and J. Koontz.

From the records it does not appear that the plan succeeded. There was a widespread notion in those days that a preacher should not be paid and it has persisted on down through the years. In spite of this stinginess on the part of the members of the churches in those days, wonderful work was done by these strong men of God. Even down to this day, people of the mountains tell stories about these preachers that have been handed down from father to son. One of these stories which has to do with Elder Enoch Reeves, who was a member of the Elk Creek Church, I have been able to verify, as far as is humanly possible without the aid of printed or written records.

In 1849 Elder Reeves went to a private home near Reeve's Ferry, five miles south of Independence, Va., on New River, and started a meeting, preaching the first sermon on one Friday night. By Sunday night following, two little girls had presented themselves as penitents and after that, interest increased with every service and the meeting ran for three weeks. At the end of the meeting, seventy-three men, women and children were led into the river and baptized by Elder Reeves and another preacher whose name I do not remember. Fifty years later I baptized a son of one of the men who was baptized on this occasion by Elder Reeves and he told me the story. Later I met a man in Ashe County who told me that as a boy he attended this meeting and witnessed the baptism of the seventy-three in New River.

A similar meeting was held by Elders Drury Senter and Nathaniel Senter at Piney Creek Church and at Beaver Creek Church at about this time and there were successful meetings in many parts of Ashe County, North Carolina, and in Grayson County, Virginia. Preachers and laymen, the Baptists of this territory in this period appear to have been imbued with the spirit of evangelism and they labored unceasingly for the salvation of souls.

The 1850 session was held with Cranberry Church, opening on September 20th, with the introductory sermon by Elder Thomas Carr, from the text Matt. 3:5-6. Elder Nathaniel Senter was chosen moderator and John Reeves clerk. The report of the finance committee showed that the nineteen churches had contributed \$20.00 with which to pay the fourteen ministers above named for their labors for the year and if any of the churches approved of the arrangement or disapproved of it, no mention is made of it in the minutes. Piney Creek Church paid half of this amount, Fox Creek \$5, Senter Church \$3, and Knob Fork \$2. Fifteen churches contributed nothing. While this looks discouraging, judged from the standards of today, it does not appear that it dimmed the zeal of these men of God, or cooled their ardor, for the record shows that they decided among themselves to continue the work, under practically the same arrangements, for another year.

One new church, Laurel Fork, was added at this session.

The following year, 1851, the Mountain Association met with Saddle Creek Church on September 26th. Elder Lowry Grimsley preached the introductory sermon from the text I Pet. 1:11, and the officers of the previous year were re-elected. At this session the name of Flat Grove Church was changed to South Fork. Elk Creek Church sent in the following query:

“Is it right to hold in fellowship a member of the church who belongs to any Division, or Order of the Sons of Temperance?”

The Sons of Temperance was a secret society, similar to the Good Templars of later days, and its basic principle was temperance in all things. Those who joined the society took a solemn oath not to use alcoholic liquors as a beverage. It seems strange to us that a church should propound such a question and that an association should give it serious consideration, but it actually happened. After consultation the association appointed a committee “to draft a preamble in answer to the above question, to consist of D. Senter, A. McMillan, John Gambill and John Reeves, and instructed said committee to answer the question in the negative.”

The committee, after due consideration, brought in the following report, which was spread upon the minutes:

“Whereas, we believe the Scripture, or Word of God, is the pillar and ground work of truth; and we believe that the great Head of the Church, in the Divine Code that He has given to the churches to be governed by, has made temperance obligatory upon us; and we feel as an Association to recommend it in its strictest sense, and do recommend it to all men and especially to the followers of Christ; and we, as an advisory counsel recommend to the churches to exclude from their membership any member, or members, who join any Division or Order of the Sons of Temperance.”

It will be seen that these early Baptists were not enemies of temperance, but its faithful proponents and their opposition to orders like the Sons of Temperance was based upon the firm belief that it was the peculiar task of the church to deal with problems of this kind and that the formation of other agencies to do the work of the church, would tend to weaken the church and draw the people away from it. In this day of super-organization, where everybody belongs to societies for the prevention of this and clubs for the propagation of that, there has come to pass in many parts of our country the very situation that these sturdy forebears of ours feared and tried to guard against—the church has delegated to these outside societies, clubs and agencies, so many of the natural and original functions of the church, that the church is no longer the dynamic force for good that it once was.

At the session the following year, 1852, held with Cross Roads Church in Grayson County, Virginia, Elder Enoch Reeves preached the introductory sermon from the text, Matt. 25:10. The officers of the previous year were re-elected. At this session it was ordered that the Baptist “Articles of Faith” be transcribed and attached to the minutes.

As will be recalled, the Mountain Association had definitely set itself against missions, in any form, back in 1838 and the two branches of the Baptist family had drifted further and further apart every year. It had reached the point where there was question in the minds of the churches as to the validity of baptism administered by a Baptist minister of the missionary branch, and it was at this session that Fox Creek and Grassy Creek churches sent up the following query:

“If a member who belonged to a missionary church and was baptized by one of them, should ask for admittance to our church, what should we do with him?”

The answer was :

“We say, as an advisory counsel, that we hold missionary baptism valid, except there be a defect in the administrator, subject or mode.”

At this point I shall leave the Mountain Association for a season and deal briefly with the Senter Association that came into existence in 1853, and with the formation of the Union Baptist Association, the United Association, the Brushy Mountain Association and other matters of interest and importance connected with the development of the Baptist cause in this territory between 1853 and the Civil War and in the years following the war. I have tried to follow in strict chronological order, the doings of the Baptists of Ashe County and of the territory surrounding from 1786 on up to 1853, and this method of dealing with them will be resumed later. It is necessary now to deal with a variety of movements that touched and affected vitally the work of the Baptists in this territory between 1853 and 1870. The written record is fragmentary and it has been difficult to find it.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SENTER BAPTIST ASSOCIATION.

The Senter Baptist Association was formed from the Mountain and Three Forks associations at a convention held at Senter Church on October 21, 1853. I think it would not be amiss here to pause a moment to pay tribute to two great preachers whose names stand out in the Baptist history of this section like two mountain peaks. The reader will recall that in the story of the Mountain Association which I have just told, there was frequent recurrence of the names of Drury Senter and Nathaniel Senter, father and son. For many years Elder Drury Senter served as moderator of the Mountain Association and his gifted son, Nathaniel M. Senter, succeeded his father. Senter Church, at which the convention was held, was named for them and the new association formed there bore their name.

Elder Solomon Stamper preached the introductory sermon for the convention and Elder Nathaniel Senter was made moderator. John Reeves, for many years clerk of the Mountain Association, was made clerk. There participated in this convention, Bear Creek, Beaver Creek, North Fork and Horse Creek churches, from the Three Forks Association, and Big Helton, Silas Creek, South Fork, Senter and Cranberry churches from the Mountain Association. These had been dismissed by letter from the Three Forks and Mountain associations for the purpose of forming the new association. The Rules of Decorum and Articles of Faith were copied from the Mountain Association and adopted in toto by the convention.

Although this convention met five years before I was born, yet it was to be my privilege to know personally many of the delegates who took part in this convention and to work with them. The delegates were as follows:

Horse Creek Church—Nathaniel Ward, Solomon Perry and John Poe.

South Fork—L. Grimsley, J. Sturgill and D. Sturgill.

Bear Creek—George Patrick and John Oliver.

North Fork—Solomon Ham, Z. Eldrith and William Weaver.

Cranberry—Solomon Stamper and John Reeves.

Senter—Nathaniel M. Senter, A. McMillan and A. Dickson.

Big Helton—R. Kilby, A. Powers and J. Weaver.

Beaver Creek—J. W. Hardin and A. Elrod.

Silas Creek—N. Stuart, P. Roberts and J. Stuart.

These nine churches had 617 members. Cranberry was the largest in the group and had 107 members. South Fork, with 44 members was the smallest.

The first annual session of the Senter Association was held with South Fork Church in Ashe County on September 21st, 1854, with Elder Nathaniel Senter as moderator and John Reeves as clerk. It is recorded that Elder John H. Vannoy preached the opening sermon, his text being Gen. 12:28. There was little of importance done at this session. The next session was held with Beaver Creek Church in Ashe County on September 14, 1855, Elder T. Woody preaching the introductory sermon from the text I Cor. 15:58, and the officers of the previous year being re-elected. Two new churches were received at this session, these being Grassy Creek Church, from the Mountain Association and New River, a newly constituted church.

In the minutes of this session appears an obituary of Elder Solomon Stamper, who died October 21, 1854, at the age of 73 years. In this obituary, the deceased was referred to as "Rev." Solomon Stamper, this being the first time I have found the title used before a preacher's name. It came into common usage in the years following but prior to that time a preacher was always referred to as "Elder."

I have been able to locate no minutes of the sessions of 1856 and 1857, but the session of 1858, the fifth year of the Senter Association, was held with Bear Creek Church in Ashe County, with Elder T. Woody again preaching the opening sermon, his text being Isaiah 54:13. Elder Nathaniel Senter was moderator and John Reeves clerk. The association at this time had thirteen churches and all of them were represented.

At this session Grassy Creek Church sent up a letter asking for advice as to the way to deal with members who were making and selling liquor, "spoiling the youths of our country and bringing disgrace on the cause of religion." To this the association made answer as follows:

"We, as an advisory council, advise our churches that if any member or members of our churches use too much ardent spirits, after the first admonition, should be expelled without sending for them. Also, if any member should make or buy spirits and allow a drunken crowd at their

house, or still house, so as to constitute a disorderly house, we advise our churches to exclude them.”

It is manifest that there had been taking place in the territory of the Senter Association an awakening of the moral sense of the people and they had begun to look with repugnance upon the excesses that many professed members of the church indulged in. Also, people were beginning to think about bettering the educational advantages of their communities and from the minutes of this session it appears that at the session of 1857 there had been a committee named to “devise a plan or platform for the establishment of a school in Ashe County.” The committee reported favorably on the project and recommended that the school be “governed by a Baptist of our faith and order.” The committee was discharged and it is not recorded that steps were taken then to establish the school. The years that followed were years of tumult, the Civil War beginning within four years, and if they had started it would have been impossible to have made any progress. The fact that this movement started, however, is important, for it shows that our mountain people had it in their minds and hearts to establish a school for their children and we will see how their dreams came true in after years.

The next session of the Senter Association was held with Silas Creek Church, beginning on September 23, 1859, with a sermon by Elder Lowry Grimsley. Elder Nathaniel Senter was elected moderator and John Reeves clerk. I found only accounts of routine business in the minutes until I came to a query from Beaver Creek Church, as follows:

“How shall we receive a member who belongs to the Jefferson Association?”

The answer was:

“We advise our churches to receive all that went off from them by acknowledgment. Those that have joined the Jefferson Association and have been baptized by those we believe to be in this order, must come in by experience and baptism.”

CHAPTER V.

THE UNION BAPTISTS, THE UNITED BAPTIST ASSOCIATION
AND OTHER THINGS.

Those who have read Lewis Carroll's story of the adventures of Alice in Wonderland, will remember those very interesting characters, the Walrus and the Carpenter, who, after a period of association marked by nothing out of the ordinary, found themselves at a point where they had to consider many diverse things.

"The time has come," the Walrus said,
"To speak of many things;
Of shoes and ships and sealing wax;
Of cabbages and kings."

So, I may drop the thread of my narrative for a while, with the view of picking it up again when I have covered several other things that properly belong in this book, because of their effect upon Baptist growth in this territory. In doing this I expect to be able to explain, in a measure, the reasons for the hostility of the communicants of the Senter Baptist Association to those of the Jefferson Baptist Association, an organization not hitherto mentioned, but which has been in existence for nine or ten years before the action of the Senter Association referred to in the last chapter.

It is probably just as well to chronicle here, briefly, the origin of the Union Baptists, who still hold forth in this mountain country, though few in numbers and weak financially and otherwise. In 1858 when the Senter Association met with Silas Creek Church, the enmity between the North and the South was already being felt in the mountains. It has been a source of surmise and conjecture to many people, that there were so many Union sympathizers in the mountains of western North Carolina, but to me there is nothing strange about it. Our mountain people were not slave-owners. Most of them were barely one generation removed from the hardships of pioneer days and they had not accumulated wealth enough to enable them to own slaves. In addition to that, the mountaineer wherever you find him, is a lover of freedom himself and is always the last man to deny freedom to others. There was no liking for the institution of slavery in the mountains.

Naturally, the strife between the two factions became keen and it crept into the churches. In 1848 the Mountain Association had gone on record, very positively, as favoring the dismissal from the church of all persons who allied themselves with the missionary movement or any sort of secret order, no matter how meritorious its purposes. This was taken to mean in those days a prohibition of membership in the Sons of Temperance and the Masonic Order, but in the days of the war and following the war, this ruling of the Mountain Association was used for other purposes. When the Union League, a secret order, came into existence following the war and Union sympathizers began to join it, the dominant party used the edict of the Mountain Association against the Union League men, and where they could muster enough votes, they ousted the Union Leaguers from their churches. If the Union League members and sympathizers could poll the most votes, the other faction was kicked out and so it went. There was hatred and bitterness and bloodshed. When I was a child I remember neighbor shooting down neighbor because of differences of opinion on political matters, such as the slavery question.

One prominent Baptist minister, with a record of usefulness behind him and who served faithfully and effectively in the years that followed, was so much stirred up over the slavery question and the troubles that had followed in the wake of the war, that he was heard to exclaim in meeting at Silas Creek Church:

“The time has come when the two parties can not live together in the church. I’ll see every rebel hung as high as Haaman’s gallows before I will fellowship them.”

Evidently, there were many of his way of thinking, for the disturbance spread and in 1867 we find ninety horses tied in the lane at the home of Rev. R. Jones of Ashe County, and more than one hundred Baptists who were Union sympathizers, gathered there for a consultation, looking to the formation of an association of their own.

“In view of the distracted cause of religion in this country,” to quote the minutes of their first meeting, “and particularly among Baptists, a meeting was appointed to be held with Silas Creek Church on the fourth Saturday in August, 1867, for the purpose of taking the whole matter into consideration and devising some course to pursue in the future.”

This meeting was held at the stated time and place and Rev. R. Jones presided. C. J. Fowlkes and S. F. Anderson were made secretaries. After the object of the meeting had been explained by the presiding officer, the following preamble and resolutions were adopted:

“Whereas from the late condition of public affairs, the churches have become disordered and confused and in some instances have departed from that purity of discipline required by the Word of God and from that simplicity of the gospel as it is in Jesus, and whereas there are those among us who have not only attempted to Lord it over God’s Heritage by interpolating and questioning both the political and civil rights in the churches, but have violated every principle of our common humanity as well as every moral principle of the Bible by acts which are notorious to all; and whereas it is certainly the duty of those who name the name of Christ to depart from iniquity and as it is due to the world and the cause of God that our position should be known,

“Therefore be it resolved, 1st, that it is the duty of the churches to deal with and put among them all who may have violated the moral precepts of the Bible by robbing, pilfering, plundering and depriving their fellow beings of life without just cause or due process of law. Or in such churches where that class may have a majority to sustain them, let the minority adopt the language of the Apostle and withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly. But no man’s political principles alone, unconnected with crime, shall be a bar or test of fellowship.

“Resolved, 2nd. That the benevolent institutions of the day should not be any bar or test of fellowship, but all should be free to sustain or not sustain as they may choose.

“Resolved, 3rd. That we believe it is the duty of the churches to encourage an enlightened, efficient and pious ministry and afford them the means to study and show themselves approved of God, workmen that need not be ashamed.

“Resolved, 4th. That all Baptists of good standing, without regard to political principles, unconnected with crime, be invited to meet in a general convention at Fox Creek, Va., on the 2nd Monday in September next for the purpose of forming an Association on the above principles, and such

churches as may choose to send up delegates for that purpose, and these resolutions as far as possible be sent to the several churches and explained."

The reader will find much in this statement with which he can sympathize. For the most part it is a straight-forward declaration of Christian principles, far in advance of those expressed by the Mountain Association when it outlawed Masons and the Sons of Temperance. Naturally, it attracted many Baptists of character in all parts of this mountain country and when the meeting was held at Fox Creek Church on September 9, 1867, there were many delegates present and seven churches handed in letters. Elder R. Jones again presided and S. F. Anderson was secretary. In the minutes of this meeting appear the names of Elder John Adams, Elder A. Powers and Elder William Halsey. Elder J. A. Caudill, and the following laymen:

J. B. Parsons, J. A. Jones, J. Thompson, J. F. Sturgill, W. Elliott, E. Parsons, and others.

This body of men decided to establish an association and it was called the Mountain Union Baptist Association. For many years after the Civil War they were called "red strings," a term of derision much used by their enemies. A red string was the badge of the Union League.

It is not my purpose to follow the fortunes of this branch of the Baptists further than to relate that they have grown since 1867 to four or five small associations. They are very unprogressive. They do not pay their pastors any salaries and they give nothing to missions, home or foreign, and nothing to benevolence. They have established no schools and they have no newspapers or other religious periodicals. Occasionally they hold protracted meetings and occasionally you will find a church that conducts a Sunday School. They were the first denomination in the mountains to insert foot-washing as a church ordinance in their Articles of Faith.

Their ministers are usually poorly educated and the support they receive from their churches is meagre indeed. In spite of this, I have always found them faithful and earnest in the discharge of their pastoral duties. They are always extremely courteous, one to another, and if five or six of them happen to meet at the same church on the same day, each preacher is given the opportunity of preaching, and they almost always improve

the opportunity. I have known six to preach, one after another, from the same pulpit on the same day.

It was my privilege to know most of the preachers that took part in the organization of the Mountain Union Baptist Association and many of those who followed them. Their first moderator, Rev. R. Jones, was a man of sterling Christian character. A. Powers was a great preacher and could repeat more Scripture from memory than any man I ever knew. J. A. Caudill was a warm-hearted, earnest preacher who did much good.

Harking back to that day in 1851 when the Mountain Association went on record as advising all of its churches to expel from their membership all those who joined the "Sons of Temperance," I wish to show the effect that the association's edict had upon the Baptist churches of that day and time. At that time Elder Aaron Johnston, a brother of my mother, was a member of Beaver Creek Church, in Ashe County. He was turned out of the church because of his membership in the proscribed organization and he said long afterwards that he was turned out of the church for doing the best thing he had ever done in his life. He kept his pledge.

At about the same time Elder Richard Gentry and his son, Capt. W. H. Gentry, were turned out of Old Fields Church, in Ashe County, for the same offense. I heard it related when I was just a boy that a fine old lady, member of Old Fields Church, rose to her feet in the church meeting and, with much feeling, addressing the moderator, said:

"Brethren, I want you to consider what you have done today, and think of the effect that it will have upon the young men of our community. You have received back into your fellowship today one man who confesses that he has been drunk and you have excluded two of our best men because they wouldn't drink." My recollection is that her name was Hartzog. She was a daughter of Elijah Calloway. Another daughter of his became the mother of Mrs. W. C. Fields, of Mouth of Wilson, Va., a leader among women in southwest Virginia.

The ousting of men of this type from Baptist churches was not confined to Ashe County. Over in Alexander County, North Carolina, Elder Robert Steele was expelled from the church for the same reason. Soon thereafter, he and three other preachers from Alexander and Wilkes counties journeyed over into Ashe County and joined forces with Elders Johnston and Gentry in

rounding up progressive, forward-looking Baptists and getting them together in church organizations. These men organized the famous old Bethel Baptist Church. The preachers who came to Ashe County with Elder Steele were Elders J. J. Watts, J. H. Watts and Z. B. Adams. A little later, Elders Johnston and Gentry went over into Alexander County and helped Elder Robert Steele and his associates organize one or more churches of the same character, these finally forming the Taylorsville Baptist Association.

The leaven spread. Within a very few years there were many churches like Bethel Church and on November 11, 1859, we find them meeting in a convention at Zion Hill Church in Wilkes County for the purpose of forming a new association to be known as the United Baptist Association. I propose to go into detail as to the organization of this association, for the reason that it was the first association in our mountain country to come out boldly for missions, Sunday-schools and temperance. It required courage of an unusually high degree to do the things that this association did and much of our Baptist achievement, of which we are so proud today, would not have been possible if these splendid men had not lived and wrought so wonderfully.

It is recorded that the convention opened with a sermon by Elder William Pool and that Elder S. Ferguson was elected moderator and P. Eller, clerk. Entering into the organization of the United Association, were three associations, viz.: Lewis Fork, with eleven churches; Lower Creek, with four churches, and Taylorsville with eleven churches, a total of twenty-six. These churches reported twenty-six ordained preachers, these being:

Richard Gentry, Aaron Johnston, J. Reed, R. L. Steele, J. G. Bryan, William Pool, J. Crouch, P. Tritt, G. Swaim, H. Holtslaw, S. P. Smith, William Church, S. Ferguson, P. Grimes, L. Pipes, H. M. Stokes, J. H. Brown, L. Land, J. McNeill, A. W. Vannoy, J. B. Green, E. Tilley, J. H. West, D. Austin, M. Austin, I. Oxford.

In addition to these there were six licentiates, as follows:

J. B. Greene, Jr., D. Welborn, J. Barnes, A. B. West, --- --- Walker and J. H. Spainhour.

The following churches participated in this epoch-making convention:

From the Lewis Fork Association—Pilgrim Church, represented by E. Davis and F. H. Foster, delegates; Lewis Fork, M. Walsh, L. Triplett and A. J. Proffitt, delegates; Little River, Elder Wm. Pool, S. Medlock and P. Barnes, delegates; Beaver Creek, Elder J. H. Brown, Thomas Carlton and J. F. Ferguson; Pleasant Hill, J. T. Baker, B. Ellis and A. A. Jolly; Zion Hill, J. Barnes and D. Welborn; Three Forks, Elder J. G. Bryan, J. Crouch and N. A. Pool; Macedonia, William Teague, D. Warren and J. Martin; New Hope, Elder J. McNeill, J. H. Spainhour and P. Eller; Walnut Grove, R. Brock and C. Low; Mt. Zion, E. K. Walsh, A. B. West and W. J. Miller.

From the Lower Creek Association—Union Church, represented by Elders I. Oxford and J. H. West; Antioch, Elders M. Austin and D. Austin and W. S. Pool; Dover, Elder H. Holtslaw, Thomas Reed and W. R. Pennell; Kings Creek, Elder E. Tilley and Thomas Isbell.

From the Taylorsville Association—Fishing Creek Church, represented by H. Curtis, E. B. Salmons and S. Smith; Taylor Springs, Elder J. R. Green, A. L. Williams; Mt. Gilead, E. Ellis, R. Hines and A. A. Hines; Taylorsville, Elder S. Ferguson, E. C. Harrington and C. Jones; Liberty Grove, Elder R. L. Steele, J. Palmer and S. Harrington, Jr.; Pleasant Grove, Elder H. M. Stokes and A. M. Foster; Bethel, Elders Richard Gentry and Aaron Johnston; Concord, G. W. McIntosh, J. H. Gyler and E. Turner; Oak Forest, D. Edwards, A. M. Parks and A. H. Martin; Senter, Elder J. Reed, E. C. Oxford and B. Reed; Mt. Airy, Elder P. Grimes.

I wish that I could give in detail the story of this convention. A few extracts from the minutes, which appear below, will be sufficient to show that these men were far ahead of their day and generation:

“Whereas, the Lewis Fork, Lower Creek and Taylorsville Associations, being met in convention by delegates from the different associations at Zion Hill for the purpose of uniting in one association, in order to be enabled to carry out the gospel principles of missions and temperance, having become united as a Missionary and Temperance body, we adopt the following constitution:

“Art. 2: In the selection of delegates the churches shall pay strict regard to the moral and intellectual qualifications of the ones appointed.

“Art 11: This Association shall withdraw her fellowship from any church in her confederacy who holds members in fellowship who distill, vend or use spirituous liquors as a beverage.”

The association also adopted a resolution favoring Sunday-schools and asked each church to make report annually to the association of the number of students and the number of verses in the Bible memorized by the students.

The next minutes of this association which I have been able to find, cover the meeting beginning October 16, 1862, with Kings Creek Church in Caldwell County. The Civil War was in progress at this time and we find Rev. W. R. Gwaltney, representing Army Colportage, present as a visiting brother. At this session no less than thirteen churches were under investigation for having violated Article 11 of the association's constitution, quoted above, and fellowship was withdrawn from three. The association continued to ring true on missions, education and temperance.

It is good to note in the minutes of this session that Elder S. P. Smith preached a missionary sermon on Sunday and that a collection for missions was taken, amounting to \$12.07. It is also recorded in the minutes that the churches had sent up to the association a total of \$67.30, to be divided as follows:

Foreign missions, \$6.25; Home missions, \$10.22½; Education, \$5.87½; Colportage, \$4.85; Clerk's compensation, \$6.00; Printing, etc. \$34.10.

Both of the churches located near Jefferson, in Ashe County, were represented at this meeting. These were Liberty Chapel, with Elder S. Trivett as pastor, and Bethel, of which Elder Aaron Johnston was pastor. Bethel Church was later moved to a point in the Beaver Creek section, eight miles south of Jefferson, where it still stands and is a flourishing church.

Elder Aaron Johnston, first pastor of Bethel Church, remained its pastor until his death on July 31, 1878. He was my maternal uncle, the son of James Harvey Johnston, who came to Wilkes County from Granville County, North Carolina, in 1806 or thereabouts. He married Elizabeth Johnson in Wilkes County in 1806 and settled on Beaver Creek, in Ashe. He was a farmer, school teacher, justice of the peace. He died on August 8, 1848. His son, Aaron Johnston, was worthy of his sturdy father, inheriting many of his splendid qualities and lovable

traits. He was truly a wonderful preacher, as many who are still living can well attest. During all of the long time that he served Bethel Church as its pastor he would accept no salary, but worked on his farm for a living. "Though dead, he yet speaketh" and will continue to speak as long as good old Bethel Church shall last. He is buried in the old cemetery at the church he loved so well.

Liberty Chapel, organized by Elder Richard Jacks, passed out of Baptist history some time between 1862 and 1867. In the latter year, when I was going to school at the old Jefferson Academy, about a quarter of a mile outside of Jefferson on the Beaver Creek road, I remember seeing a few scattered shingles from the old church building on the ground where the church had stood. Elder S. Trivett, its last pastor, acquired the old building and moved it into Jefferson, where he converted it into a barn. He quit the ministry, became a merchant and later studied law. He went into politics and was elected to the Legislature from Ashe County in 1874. Afterwards he moved to Morganton, N. C., and later to Clay Center, Mo., where he began preaching again. The last I heard of him he was still preaching and was practicing "Faith Healing." He had many admirable qualities and everybody loved him. I remember him as a man of splendid physique, pleasing in appearance, and a speaker of rare eloquence.

With the passing of Liberty Chapel Church the name of the man who organized the church also passed from the records and for many years it appeared no more in the history of the Baptists of Ashe County. I remember to have heard him preach at Buffalo Church in 1881 from the text Acts 5:31 and at that time he was a very old man.

There will be more about Richard Jacks in the story of the Jefferson Association, which he was largely instrumental in forming. Appearing in the minutes of the sessions of the Jefferson and other associations I have been able to pick up small scraps of information concerning this unusual man and all that I have learned about him has served to increase my admiration for him.

He came as a young man from somewhere in Alabama and he married an Ashe County girl. We find him associated with our Baptist work in the mountains for more than fifty years. In 1836 there is a record of his attending the sessions of the Sandy Creek Association in the central part of North Carolina as a

correspondent from the Yadkin Association. (See Purefoy's History of the Sandy Creek Association, page 175.) White Top, Young's Chapel, Liberty Chapel and other churches were organized by him.

He was a man of the highest ideals and of the sternest, most uncompromising principles. There was much of the early Puritan in his makeup and when he engaged in a battle for what he thought was right, he neither gave nor asked quarter. As will be seen in the story of the Jefferson Association, he believed in missions, in the purity of the ministry and in temperance. He fought Satan wherever he found him, denouncing sin and the sinner in much the same fashion as did John the Baptist. Naturally, he made enemies of the bitterest and most vindictive kind and these enemies were able to turn the minds of many good people against him. I have never believed any of the charges that they preferred against him and I will not dignify his traducers by repeating their charges here.

Naturally, he did not take the charges lying down. He was not the man to suffer in silence and bow supinely when men reviled him, and he fought back courageously. When he saw that in certain quarters he could not prevail against his enemies and that further conflict could result only in serious hurt to the cause he loved, he quit the ministry and for many years he did not preach. It had always been his conviction that a minister should be, like Cæsar's wife, "above suspicion," and he had frequently said so. Therefore, when faced with a situation that he could not entirely clear up, he retired from the ministry.

It is good to know that this man of God returned to the ministry before he died. I remember hearing my mother say when I was just a boy that she had "heard a man preach today who had been a preacher for seventy-five years." She was referring to Elder Richard Jacks. Only a few days ago I went to see a dear cousin of mine, Mrs. Jane Howell, who lives in Wilkes County, and she told me that she remembered Elder Jacks well. She is now (August 14, 1927) 79 years old. Elder Jacks baptized her. She said that he was a plain, blunt-spoken man, saying whatever he thought, in the pulpit or out of it.

She related a peculiarity of his that is worth mentioning. She said that when Elder Jacks visited her father's home, which was often, he always kept his hat on, even at the table. When called upon to return thanks before eating, he would reach up with

both hands and draw his hat down over his face and hold it there while returning thanks. Then he would push it back on his head.

It should be noted in passing that the United Association changed its name to the Brushy Mountain Association, in 1872, which name it bears today, and that Bethel Church retained its membership in this association until the Ashe and Alleghany Association was formed in 1886.

CHAPTER VI.

THE JEFFERSON BAPTIST ASSOCIATION.

I have traced the development of the Mountain Association, through its different branches, from its mother association, the Yadkin and its grand-mother, the Strawberry Association in Virginia, giving all of the information available concerning them, back to 1786. It becomes necessary to our purpose now to follow another line of descent from these original sources.

The Briar Creek Association was formed from the Yadkin Association in 1821, at a convention held at old Briar Creek Church in Wilkes County. This fine old church still stands in Wilkes, by the side of State Highway No. 60. Over the front door in big black letters are these words:

“Briar Creek Baptist Church—Constituted 1783.”

The convention was made up of the following churches:

Briar Creek, represented by Thomas Masten, William Gillam, William King, John Martin and James Martin.

Bethel Church (Wilkes County), William Dodson, Sr., William Dodson, Jr., and George Gilreath.

Fishing Creek Church, Jesse Adams, Joshua Johnston and W. M. Wright.

Little River Church, John Swaim, James Robinet and Archibald Brown.

Snow Creek Church, John Angell.

Mitchell's River Church, Stephen Potter, John March and Gideon Potter.

Roaring River, Thomas Douglass and Elisha Richardson.

Zion Hill, William Mitchell and Jonathan Woody.

Cool Spring, Ambrose Johnson and David Jacks.

The convention organized by electing Elder Thomas Masten moderator and Col. James Martin clerk.

I hope I may be pardoned for mentioning here that three of these delegates, Joshua Johnston, Ambrose Johnson and David Jacks, were great uncles of mine, and that before that time and since, my family has been closely allied with the Baptist work in this territory.

It is not my purpose to follow the history of the Briar Creek Association further than is necessary to show the kinship and common origin of all of the Baptists of Ashe County, North Carolina, and Grayson County, Virginia, and we will skip the 27 years

between this convention and the 1848 session of the Briar Creek Association, which was held with the church at Lewis' Meeting House in Wilkes County, on September 4th. Nineteen churches were represented, two of these being Liberty Chapel and Baptist Chapel, of Ashe County. Rev. Richard Jacks was pastor of both churches. Two newly constituted churches, Liberty Chapel and White Top, the latter in Grayson County, Virginia, were admitted.

In the minutes we find this statement:

“Took up the request of six of our churches from the other side of the Blue Ridge, who petitioned to be organized into a new association. The association agreed to appoint a committee to go over and examine into the standing of those churches; and if they think proper, they are authorized to constitute them into an association. The delegation to consist of the following brethren, to-wit:

“S. P. Smith, Jesse Adams, Z. B. Adams, S. D. Swaim, William Chappel, James Parks.

“The convention to be held at Liberty Chapel, near Ashe courthouse, on Friday before the fifth Sunday in October next.”

We also find in these minutes that Briar Creek Association is still in correspondence and fellowship with the mother association, the Yadkin, and it is recorded that the association had paid \$10.00 to the objects of the Baptist State Convention and J. Parks was appointed a delegate to carry this amount and deliver it at the meeting of the convention to be held with Rockford Church in Surry County in October, 1848. Attached to the minutes is a splendid circular letter from Rev. R. Jacks on “Church Discipline.”

The convention met at the time and place appointed and organized by electing Rev. Richard Jacks as moderator and S. F. Anderson as secretary. The following churches were found to be represented by delegates:

Baptist Chapel, represented by R. Jacks, James Testerman, James Blevins, Jacob Stitt and Benjamin De Board.

Baptist Union, S. Ross, J. Rimer, Jesse N. Ross, J. Brown and J. C. Parks.

Liberty Chapel, D. Blevins and Robert McGuire.

Sugar Grove Chapel, Aaron Blankenbeckler.

White Top, E. Edmondson, A. Blevins, B. Barlow and David Tucker.

Young's Chapel, William Young, William Perry, D. Sheets and S. F. Anderson.

Four of the seven brethren named by the Briar Creek Association to have charge of the formation of the new association were present, these being S. P. Smith, Z. B. Adams, S. D. Swaim and J. M. Parks. They completed their work on October 30, 1848, and the new organization was named the Jefferson Baptist Association.

Then follows the Constitution, Articles of Faith and Rules of Decorum; not essentially different from other associations, except Articles 11 and 15 in the Constitution, which contain the following language:

"The Association requests all the churches within her bounds, having gifts for the ministry, to send them up to the Association for examination, and if found orthodox and qualified, to be ordained in the presence of the whole association. Ordinations only to be attended to in or at our associations.

"Art. 15. The Mission question shall be no bar nor test of fellowship with any; but all shall be free, and shall have the privilege of acting and doing with his own, as he or they may in their own judgment think proper without interruption or molestation."

The association starts off with three ordained preachers, five "exhorters" and 313 members.

On motion of S. F. Anderson, the association agreed to cooperate with the North Carolina Baptist State Convention and the Briar Creek Association in supporting Rev. S. P. Smith to travel and preach in the bounds of the Briar Creek and Jefferson associations, at \$25.00 per month.

Adjourned to meet on second Saturday in October, 1849, at Baptist Chapel Church, eleven miles north of Jefferson, in Ashe County.

Then follows a "Circular Letter" by Elder R. Jacks, which I give in full for the information of the present generation, that they may know of conditions as they existed 75 or 80 years ago:

"The following are a part of the reasons that led to the division between the churches that now compose the Jeffer-

son Association, and Mountain and Three Forks Associations:

“First: In 1836 the Mountain Association while in session, assumed to itself the name and character of an Anti-Missionary Association. We being possessed of liberal principles, refused to fellowship the name and character.

“Secondly: In 1837, while in session, a motion was made to invite transient ministers to a seat, which had ever been their usual practice; but the motion was objected to; the objecter was called on to make his objection known, which he did by saying: ‘There were no transient ministers present except Culpepper and Freeman and they are missionaries and the Missionaries are about to erect a monument over the grave of Luther Rice which would cost from \$50,000.00 to \$100,000.00.’

“The above-named brethren asked leave to reply to his erroneous statements, which was denied them. Thus they were denied liberty of speech and from having a seat, and most astonishing of all, they kept this important movement out of their minutes.

“Thirdly: In 1838, while in session, a resolution was passed dropping correspondence with all associations and advising all of their churches to deal with and put from among them all those who joined any of the ‘institutions of the day,’ or advocated them. This resolution was protested against at the time and they were pleaded with for equal protection, which they utterly refused to grant; in consequence of the same the Briar Creek and Lewis Fork Associations, with us, refused to submit to this resolution and rejected the correspondence of the Mountain Association, the terms upon which that association proposed to continue correspondence being such that none of the sister associations would accede to them. In 1839 there were three requests from the churches presented to the association requesting that the resolutions should be rescinded and that the correspondence of the sister associations be regained. Instead of granting the requests of the churches, to our astonishment they passed another resolution denying the express meaning of the words used in the resolution passed in 1838. Also, at this session there were two other churches that came forward from the Briar Creek Association without letter of dismissal and made application for

admittance into the association; the reception of these churches was objected to but the majority received them over the minority. It was then alleged that the constitution had been violated. The majority then altered the constitution so as to make the reception of these churches constitutional and after having transacted business of such vital importance to the association, refused to let it appear in their minutes.

“In 1840 the association violated her constitution by sending a committee to a church that was fully represented in the association. The church did not receive the committee because they had not asked for it.

“The last reason that we shall insert is that the Mountain Association retains in her fellowship a minister against whom charges of the most acrimonious nature have been brought and he has ever failed to acquit himself of these charges.

“We wish it distinctly understood that the Three Forks Association remained in connection with and was a component part of the Mountain Association until all of the foregoing acts were passed and consequently, she was accessory to these acts and she still endeavors to justify them by keeping up a correspondence with that body.

“Thus we have briefly stated some of the reasons that led to a division between the two parties. We shall next proceed to give the reasons why we receive members from their churches without letters of dismission:

“In the first place, it inevitably appears that there is no fellowship between the two parties, it having long since ceased.

“And secondly, we allege that it would be inconsistent for us to receive members dismissed in full fellowship from their churches when there is no fellowship between their churches and ours.

“Thirdly, it is the general practice throughout the denomination, wherever similar divisions have taken place, to receive them without letters of dismission.

“Therefore, for the future our church doors will be open, as ever, for the reception of members from their churches and all applicants from these churches will be required to sustain a good moral and Christian character.”

Elder Jacks, taking this logical and courageous stand, was well ahead of the leaders of his day. I have always had the highest admiration for him and I fully believe that much of the achievements that we Baptists boast of today may be traced back to his courageous and far-sighted leadership. Those who are familiar with Baptist usages of today will find it difficult to realize that there was ever a time when Baptists, particularly Baptist ministers of good repute, could not get a hearing in a Baptist association, but such was the case back in the days that Elder Jacks was writing about.

I do not know anything about the preacher Freeman that he referred to but I have heard stories about Culpepper, who was familiarly and affectionately known throughout the length and breadth of our mountain section as "Father" Culpepper. A fine old Christian whom I knew as a boy, verified the statement made by Elder Jacks and told how "Father" Culpepper, with tears streaming down his cheeks, pleaded with his brethren to be allowed to explain the distorted stories that had been spread abroad among Baptists, but they would not hear him.

Culpepper gave his life and his all to the cause of Christ and when he was dead it was found that he had left his horse and buggy, all the property he had in the world, to the Baptist State Convention to be used in the work of the Master.

As has been previously noted, Elder Richard Jacks was not exactly popular with the brethren of the Mountain and Senter associations. As far back as 1848 we found the Mountain Association taking steps to review the conduct of Elder R. Jacks and in the statement above may be found the reason for it. At the 1848 session, the Mountain Association came out positively against Elders R. Jacks and Stephen Ross, advising its churches that baptism at the hands of either was not acceptable and that members of the so-called "Missionary" Baptist Churches who had been baptized by Jacks or Ross could not be received in churches of the Mountain Association without being baptized again.

It is apparent that the hostility to Elder R. Jacks was equally as strong in Senter and Three Forks associations. Both of these associations had been formed from the Mountain Association, the Senter being made up of churches from the Mountain and Three Forks, and it is natural that this should have been so. It was in 1859 that we found the Senter Association proclaiming that members seeking admission in the Senter, coming from the

Jefferson Association and who had been baptized by those "in disorder," must be baptized again.

It appears, however, that the small but progressive Jefferson Association was not alone in the mountains, for at the session of 1849 we find it in correspondence with the Yadkin, Briar Creek and Liberty Baptist associations in North Carolina and the Lebanon Association in Virginia.

There follows a period of which I have no record but in 1853 we find the Jefferson Association in session at Baptist Union Church in Grayson County, Virginia, with Elder Stephen Ross as moderator and J. H. Perkins clerk. Eight churches were represented, as follows:

Baptist Union, represented by Stephen Ross, John Connoy, Jesse Ross and Pilgrim Parks.

Mount Pleasant, by Daniel Blevins, Peter Ernest, S. Blackburn, Jr., and William Hurley.

Liberty Chapel, by Enoch Walters, James L. Pope, John Garvey and Elijah Pope.

Sugar Grove, by John Cress, Samuel Houndshell, R. K. Slemph and Jonathan McCloud.

Baptist Chapel, by James Blevins, W. Thompson, James Testerman and Jackson Blevins.

Youngs Chapel, by William Young, W. G. Baldwin, J. H. Perkins and J. B. Young.

White Top, by Elijah Edmondson, Uriah Huffman, Henry Farmer and Jackson Lewis.

Friendship, by William Ross and Walden Carter.

One new church was received at this session, this being Union Church, represented by Armstrong Blevins, William Brown, Nathaniel Eastridge and A. Davidson.

When correspondents were asked to present themselves, several notable preachers came forward, among them being Elders V. Bowers and N. C. Baldwin, of the Lebanon Association in Virginia; Elder S. D. Swaim and Thomas Howell, from the Briar Creek Association, and H. G. Brown from the Yadkin Association. Elder Baldwin was a great Baptist leader in southwest Virginia for many years. He organized the Baptist Church at Marion, Va. Elder V. Bowers, usually called "Volly" Bowers, was a man of unusual powers and a preacher of rare eloquence. Forty-five years ago a gentleman living six miles north of Taylorsville, now Mountain City, in Johnson County, Tennessee, told me that he listened to Volly Bowers preach a sermon and upon

leaving the church mounted his horse and rode for many miles in the opposite direction from home before realizing what he was doing.

At this session the association struck out the provision in its charter requiring that preachers be ordained at meetings of the association and placed the work back in the hands of the local churches. The association went on record as opposing the use of liquor and passed the following resolution:

“That the joining or not joining the Sons of Temperance shall be no test of fellowship.”

Another resolution, which is important because it shows that four-score years ago our mountain Baptists were awakening to the need of a higher type of ministry and to the importance of using the utmost discretion in presenting candidates for the ministry, was passed at this session, as follows:

“Whereas, the Baptist denomination has suffered much in past years in consequence of the character of her ministry; and, whereas, we consider it absolutely necessary for us, in view of the present age of improvement, and the character of ministers demanded by our denomination, arising from the many sources of opposition with which we as a denomination have to contend; therefore,

“Resolved, that we advise the churches to offer no man for ordination without the concurrence of the ablest and most judicious brethren within their bounds and the fullest assurance that such candidate is ‘apt to teach.’ ”

Then follows another resolution in which the churches are strongly urged to subscribe liberally for the support of the ministry and to pay after they subscribe. It is set out in no uncertain fashion in this resolution that it is unmanly, ungentlemanly and unchristian in the extreme to subscribe and not pay.

Elder Stephen Ross was chosen as missionary for the year at a salary of \$399, one-third to be paid by the association and the remainder by the Goshen Association in Virginia.

In the minutes of this session are set down the dates of the organization of the various churches in the association, which I give here:

Baptist Chapel, 1842; Liberty Chapel, 1847; Mount Pleasant, 1849; Union, 1853. All of these were in Ashe County.

Baptist Union, 1842; White Top, 1847; Young's Chapel, 1845; Friendship, 1852; Sugar Grove, 1842. The first four were in Grayson County, Virginia, and the last-named in Smythe County, Virginia.

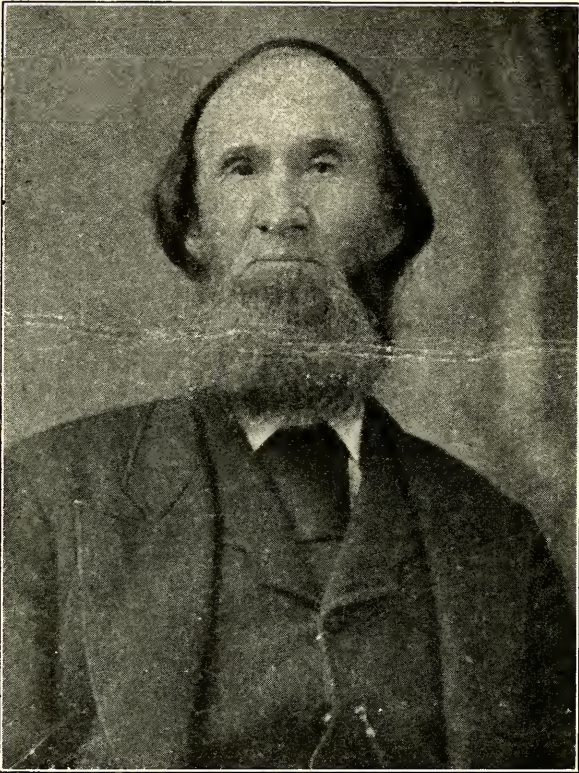
The reader will note that the Rye Valley Church, with which we started in the organization of the Yadkin Association, had disappeared. There is a probability that Elder George McNeill, first moderator of the Yadkin Association, in 1790, organized this church but how long it lived and how and why it disappeared, we do not know. Sugar Grove Church, above referred to, is supposed to stand near the site of the old Rye Valley Church.

At this session of the association, Apple Grove, a new church, was admitted and a movement was set on foot by N. C. Baldwin to organize a church at Abingdon, Va. However, many years were to pass before this church was built.

The 1854 session of the Jefferson Association was held with Mount Pleasant Church in Ashe County. At this session twenty baptisms were reported and the total membership was 391. This session was marked by a series of unusually strong sermons by visiting ministers, among them being two funeral sermons by Elders Volly Bowers and N. C. Baldwin, a sermon by Elder H. G. Brown on "Searching the Scriptures," a powerful discourse on Baptism, three hours in length, by Elder J. A. Davis, who used as his text Matt. 28:19, 20.

When the association had run its course, the people were not ready to return to their homes and a revival meeting started that resulted in many conversions and the addition of twenty-five members to Mount Pleasant Church. Occurrences like this were not out of the ordinary in those days, when the business side of associational meetings was not so important and people had time to enjoy the social and religious phases of the annual gatherings. In those days the associations lasted not less than four days, while today we race through sessions that are practically all business, listen to not more than one sermon, and then rush back to farm, profession or business. It is extremely difficult to keep delegates at an association longer than one day and never more than two.

The minutes record that at this time the association had three ordained ministers, Elders Armstrong Blevins, Elijah Edmondson and Stephen Ross, and one licentiate, Jackson Blevins.



REV. W. C. PARKS

This session will forever be notable for the movement started then for the founding of a school in our mountain section, for the purpose of helping young men to fit themselves for positions of responsibility, and particularly to provide for the training of young preachers. The following resolution, presented by a committee of which N. C. Baldwin was chairman, was adopted:

“Resolved, First, that we recommend to the churches to make a speedy and united effort to get up a school of high character at some suitable point within our associational limits;

“Resolved, Second, that in order that this thing may be consummated, a committee of nine shall be appointed, whose duty it shall be to take active and efficient steps to secure a suitable location for the erection of a suitable building, the appointment of a suitable agent to collect funds for the completion of the same, and to secure the services of a teacher to teach the English sciences thoroughly and to report their proceedings and success to the next meeting of the association;

“Resolved, Third, that the committee be instructed in making the selection of a suitable location for said school to have particular reference to the most wealthy and densely populated community.”

The committee was duly appointed, consisting of the following:

William Young, Wiley G. Baldwin, William C. Parks, James Blevins, David Smith, Daniel Blevins, Andrew Dickson, Jonathan B. Young, Jesse Reeves.

I have no more minutes of the Jefferson Association for the years that follow and I do not know what progress was made by this committee, nor what sort of report was made on the subject. As has already been told, the Senter Association, in 1857, set about the same task, probably spurred on by the action of the Jefferson Association three years before. The next minutes I find cover the twentieth annual meeting of the Jefferson Association, which was held with Mount Pleasant Church again, in September, 1868. Whether sessions of the association were held every year or not, I do not know, but I am strongly of the opinion that they were not. During this period the churches in Virginia, with the exception of White Top, dropped off one by one and

joined the Lebanon Association in Virginia. In the minutes of the third annual session of the United Association, held in 1862, we find Liberty Chapel represented by delegates, this church having left the Jefferson Association probably in the preceding year. At the 1868 session letters were handed in from five churches, as follows:

Baptist Chapel, represented by W. Thompson, P. Blevins, D. Sheets and D. Blevins.

Apple Grove, by A. Pennington, D. Tucker, D. Blevins and E. Blevins.

Landmark, by T. M. Duncan, Levi Barker, J. Denny and Alfred Barker.

Mount Pleasant, by J. Blevins, D. Blevins, J. Eller, J. M. Carter and J. Green.

White Top, by C. Pennington, Allen Blevins, J. Blevins and I. Edmondson.

It appears that in twenty years the Jefferson Association had lost three churches, one-half of its number, and gained one, had lost two ordained ministers and gained one, and had remaining only 214 members out of an original membership of 313. It must be remembered that the period through which the association had passed was one of turmoil and trouble. The Civil War dragged its bloody and soul-trying way to a close in 1865 and in its wake came hatred and jealousies that were still flaming in our mountain country for a generation after the war. Apparently, the Jefferson Association made no progress on its educational movement and the matter was dropped until it was taken up again in a new association many years later.

I do not have the minutes of the Jefferson Association of 1869 but I know that it met with Apple Grove Church and I have it on the highest authority that the brethren were so discouraged that they talked seriously of giving up the struggle and dissolving. They lacked preachers and they were short on hope and zeal. They had started out as a missionary organization, but they had made it clear from the beginning that every man was to be free to give or not to give, just as he pleased, and I can find no record that anybody gave anything to missions at any time.

I recall distinctly my first gift to missions and it may be of interest, by way of contrast with conditions of today, to tell about it here. I was just a little boy and the amount was fifty

cents. My church had no connections through which our contributions could be forwarded to the Baptist Foreign Mission Board, and I sent my fifty cents to the treasurer of the Baptist State Convention, designating it as a direct gift to Matthew T. Yates, our great missionary in China. I am sure that no church in Ashe County took collections for foreign missions at that time.

Truly, those were hard days. As a little boy my heart was stirred by the great religious need of this wonderful mountain section and many a time have I climbed to the tops of the mountains around the little town of Jefferson and looking out over that beautiful, awe-inspiring stretch of mountains and valleys, prayed to God that He would send me to tell them the way of salvation. He did, starting me when I was 17 years old. Tears fill my eyes as I write of those days when the harvest was so great and the laborers so few. For 52 years I have been telling the story. How much more time He will give me I know not but "the Lord's appointment is the servant's hour."

Before passing on to the organization of the New River Baptist Association, I would like to review briefly the histories of the churches that made up the Jefferson Association, which churches formed the nucleus for the new association, and provided the ground work of the Baptist structure that now exists in Ashe County. Some of this information I have culled from the old files of minutes, but most of it has come from aged men and women who were familiar with the facts and who told me about these churches.

Baptist Chapel Church was organized in the year 1842 by B. Roby and Stephen Ross. This church was in Ashe County.

Baptist Union, in Grayson County, Virginia, was organized in 1842 from the remnants of an older church that had existed in the neighborhood, but which had dissolved. Richard Jacks and Stephen Ross organized it.

Sugar Grove Church, in Smythe County, Virginia, was also organized in 1842 and it is supposed to have come mainly from the old Rye Valley Church, which withdrew from the Strawberry Association in 1790 to become part of the Yadkin Association when it was constituted. I can find no record as to the men who organized this church.

Young's Chapel Church, in Grayson County, Virginia, was organized on November 8, 1845, by Richard Jacks and Stephen Ross, with six members, as follows: Phœbe Mathina, from Fox

Creek Church; David Sheets, William Perry and Stephen F. Anderson from Baptist Chapel Church in Ashe County; William Young and Jane Young from Baptist Union Church. Today Young's Chapel is one of our strongest and most progressive churches and has a membership of 223.

Friendship Church, in Grayson County, Virginia, was organized in 1852 and I can find no other information concerning its early history, nor subsequent history. It disappeared many years ago and no one knows where it was located.

Liberty Chapel Church, which stood near Ashe County courthouse, was organized by Richard Jacks in 1847, and it was at this church, as has been related, that the Jefferson Association was constituted. In 1862 we find this church and its pastor, Richard Jacks, in the United Baptist Association, which had been formed in 1859 and which was at that time, the most progressive and most thoroughly missionary Baptist of all of our associations. We can readily understand how such an association would appeal to a militant spirit, such as Richard Jacks most certainly was. The Jefferson Association was professedly missionary, but in all of its records I can find no trace of giving to missions by any of its churches. The United Association not only professed faith in missions, but put its faith into practice. It is not strange that it should have attracted Richard Jacks and the church which he had established and shepherded.

White Top Church, in Grayson County, Virginia, was organized by Richard Jacks in 1847.

Mount Pleasant Church, in Ashe County, was organized in 1849, by whom I do not know, but I have reason to believe that Richard Jacks had a hand in it. It was at this church that the New River Baptist Association, whose fortunes we are to follow, was organized in 1870.

It will be noted that Richard Jacks took part in organizing four of the eight churches above referred to and was probably concerned with the formation of another. Almost equally active in organization work was Stephen Ross. It was to the ministry of these two great servants of God that the Mountain and Senter Baptist associations objected so strenuously that they refused to accept candidates for church membership who had been baptized by either Jacks or Ross.

At this last session of which I have record, the death of Elder Armstrong Blevins was reported, he having died on June 14,

1868, in his 53rd year. The minutes contain a beautiful tribute to his character and splendid service in the cause of the Master.

While the situation was not encouraging and the future looked dark, it is good to note that progress was being made along many lines. James Eller, clerk of the 1868 session of the association, has set down in the minutes many items not usually included in minutes of such meetings. He records that at this time Baptist Chapel was supplied by the labors of Elders Jackson Blevins and Levi Barker and that it had "a flourishing Sabbath school." Apple Grove was supplied by Elders J. Green, Jackson Blevins, and Levi Barker. Landmark was supplied by Elders J. Blevins, T. M. Duncan and Levi Barker, and was "in harmony with Young's Chapel and Antioch churches, the difficulty between them having been adjusted." Mount Pleasant was reported as having a fine Sabbath School and regular preaching by its pastor, Elder J. Blevins. Elder Aaron Johnston, of the United Association, had given this church much of his time. Also, Elder T. M. Duncan, J. Green and Levi Barker had been of a great assistance during the year. White Top Church was reported as having the labors of Elders J. Blevins and Levi Barker, and was "in a prosperous condition; carries on a flourishing Sunday School and has been doing much good."

On the Sabbath, the closing day of the session, there began a revival that lasted several days and resulted in many conversions and additions to the church.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NEW RIVER BAPTIST ASSOCIATION.

There was a convention held at Baptist Chapel Church in Ashe County, beginning on June 10, 1870, for the purpose of organizing a new association to be made up of churches from the Jefferson, Lebanon and United Baptist associations. The introductory sermon was preached by Elder Aaron Johnston, from the text Heb. 12:2.

Elder J. B. Jones was elected moderator and James Eller clerk. The convention immediately set about its task and it was decided to call a general convention of the churches connected with the Jefferson, United, Lebanon and Mountain Union associations "to consider matters of great importance, looking to the formation of a new association."

The following very significant preamble and resolution was presented and, after discussion, adopted:

"Whereas, differences of opinion have existed between some of the churches connected with the Lebanon and Jefferson associations, and certain proceedings enacted in some of said churches calculated to wound the feelings of some members of said churches, in view of a final settlement of all difficulties of whatever character which have heretofore existed, and the further object of a re-union, be it

"Resolved, by this convention: That we hereby ignore whatever occurred in the past and declare our willingness to, and do hereby, retract whatever has heretofore been done in any of the churches contrary to the spirit of the gospel and regular Baptist usage."

The present generation knows little, and, apparently, cares less about the troubles that dismembered the Jefferson Association and sister associations and provided the necessity for this convention and the resolution above set out. The Baptist leaders who met in this convention, thought they had smoothed the way for settling all difficulties but they were not settled. In 1876 we find Baptist Chapel Church, where this convention was held, breaking away from its new ties and joining the Mountain Union Association. Baptist Chapel was the first distinctively and avowedly missionary Baptist church to be formed in Ashe County after the "Great Split."

However, this digression is overrunning our story which has to do now with the convention. It was decided to refer the resolutions to the churches and a statement of considerable length was prepared, in which it was set out that they were missionary Baptists, believing in missions, but not in favor of taxing their members for the support of missionaries, or coercing them into giving. With this done, the convention adjourned to meet on Friday before the fourth Sunday in October, 1870, at Mount Pleasant Church in Ashe County.

I do not have the minutes of the organization meeting of the New River Association which was held in accordance with adjournment, nor do I have the minutes of the first session, which met at Baptist Union, in Grayson County, Virginia, in October, 1871.

The organization meeting at Mount Pleasant Church was presided over by Elder Stephen Ross, as moderator, and W. C. Parks was clerk. The introductory sermon was preached by Elder J. B. Jones. The first annual meeting at Baptist Union, was presided over by Elder J. B. Jones, with W. C. Parks again serving as clerk. Elder Stephen Ross preached the introductory sermon.

The second annual session of the New River Association was held with Fellowship Church, beginning August 22, 1872. The introductory sermon was preached by Elder J. J. L. Sherwood from the text Matt. 28:19-20. Elder Sherwood was elected moderator and W. C. Parks was elected clerk.

When an invitation to visiting brethren was extended by the moderator, Elders B. G. Maynard and J. M. Halsey, of the Lebanon Association, presented themselves and were invited to seats in the body. Elder Maynard was representing the Bristol Female College, a Baptist school, not to be mistaken for Inter-mont College, a Baptist institution now in the same city. Elder Maynard made a splendid impression on the association and his plea for his institution met with gratifying response. I have already recorded that forward-looking Baptists in the Jefferson and Senter associations had it on their hearts to provide for better education of their young men, particularly looking to the improvement of the ministry, but this is the first account I can find in the history of the Baptists of this territory, of any interest being shown in the higher education of girls. At this session, following the report of Elder J. J. L. Sherwood on education, the association pledged \$475.00 for Bristol Female College. That

the education of young men was not forgotten, is shown by this paragraph from Elder Sherwood's report:

"We must have educated men for all of the relations of life, regardless of vocation. To these ends we would most earnestly recommend the establishment of good academic schools of high grade within the bounds of the association."

It appears from the records of this session that at the previous session in 1871, Elder J. J. L. Sherwood had been appointed associational missionary, for he made a report at this session of the work done during the year and the association decided to continue him in that capacity. Pledges for his support, amounting to \$156.65, were made by the association. It also appears, from reports of standing committees at this session that the opening session had taken an advanced stand on missions, education and Sunday Schools.

The statistical tables in the minutes for the 1872 session show a total membership of 611 in thirteen churches. Landmark and Baptist Chapel churches were not represented.

Apple Grove Church was represented by D. Tucker, W. P. Lewis and G. C. Gilbert. Elder S. Blackburn was reported as pastor of the church.

Baptist Union, by S. Perkins, L. L. Long, S. Ross and W. P. Long. Elder W. C. Parks, pastor.

Fellowship, by D. P. Robinson, W. Calahan, A. Wright and John Cannoy. Elder J. J. L. Sherwood, pastor.

Forest Home, by James Eller, R. Wallace and A. F. Wilcox. No pastor.

Galena, by J. H. Hampton, B. Bird and L. D. Vaughan. Elder A. S. Murray, pastor.

Grubbs Chapel, by J. Grubb, J. Haga, J. G. Jones and J. Testerman. Elder W. C. Parks, pastor.

Independence, by M. B. Dickey and E. M. James. No pastor.

Liberty Hill, by William Carson and Thomas Bennett. Elder W. C. Parks, pastor.

Mount Pleasant, by Robert Blevins and A. P. Howell. Elder Jackson Blevins, pastor.

White Top, by W. L. Blevins and A. L. Pennington. Pastor, Elder E. Ayers.

Young's Chapel, by L. L. Perkins, W. C. Parks and J. J. L. Sherwood. No pastor.

The third annual session of the New River Association was held with Liberty Hill Church in Grayson County, beginning on October 9, 1873, with the introductory sermon by Elder J. T. Kincannon. Elder J. J. L. Sherwood was again elected moderator and J. B. Jones was elected clerk and treasurer.

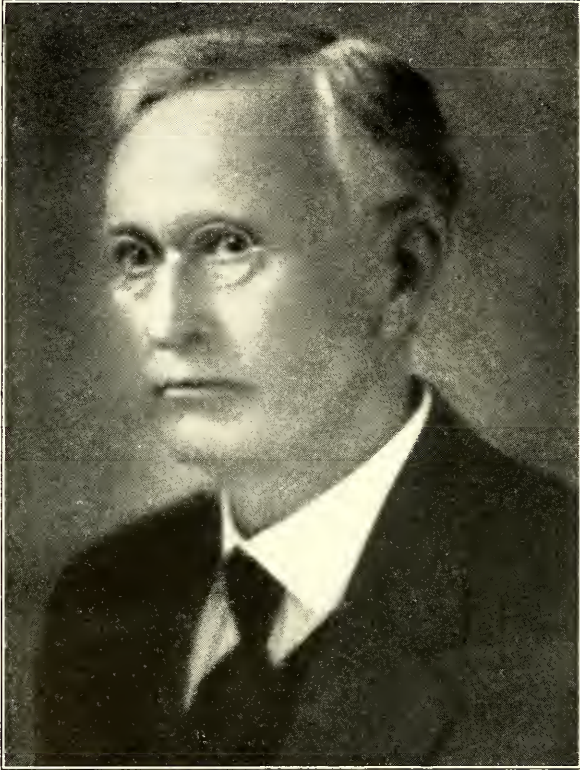
It was decided at this session to continue the associational missionary work and Elder Sherwood was retained as missionary. Individual pledges were made for his support amounting to \$205. Interest was still high in the Bristol Female College and three men, W. C. Fields, D. F. Roberts and another whose name was not given, subscribed \$50.00 each for this school. \$18.00 was contributed toward a parsonage to be erected at Marion, Va., this being done after the matter had been presented forcefully by Elder R. B. Boatright.

I think that this session of the association was one of the greatest in the association's entire history, in many respects. I find that the reports presented by the various committees were of unusually high order, especially notable being the report on periodicals, by James Eller; the report on Colportage, by Robert Blevins; the report on Sabbath Schools, by L. N. Perkins; the report of progress of the Baptists, by W. C. Parks; the report of missions, by J. H. Perkins; the report on temperance, by William Carson, and the report on education by Dr. E. M. James.

Dr. James suggested that immediate steps be taken to establish a "male school of high grade." Elder W. C. Parks and Wiley G. Young then presented a proposition from Young's Chapel Church to construct an academy at Oak Hill, promising to contribute largely to their means toward construction and maintenance. Elder Parks placed the matter before the association in the following resolution, which was unanimously adopted:

"Resolved, that this association respond to and accept the proposition of Young's Chapel Church to construct an academy at Oak Hill and they will contribute of their means to said object."

The association then named a committee of five, consisting of E. M. James, James Comer, Alex Stamey, W. C. Parks and Levi Long, to select nine trustees for the new school, to whom the real estate necessary for the school should be conveyed, and who should supervise the erection of the school and direct its operations. This committee gave the matter due consideration and



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named the following as the first board of trustees of "Oak Hill Academy":

Elder W. C. Parks, Elder J. B. Jones, W. G. Young, L. N. Perkins, William Carson, John W. Ross, James Eller, D. Blevins, W. C. Fields.

The committee's nominees were unanimously elected and it was provided that their successors would be elected by the association. I think I should record here the first gifts to this, the first Baptist school in the mountains of northwestern North Carolina and this part of southwest Virginia. The amounts appear to be small, but in view of the poverty of the times, they are truly large. They are listed as follows:

Andrew Greer, \$50; James Eller, \$25; J. B. Jones, \$25; J. Sayers, \$10; David Lovelace, \$25; P. Blevins, \$25; E. McCarrroll, \$25; J. York, \$25; A. C. Holdaway, \$25; J. Testerman, \$25 (the last three to be paid in work); J. A. Dickey, \$25; J. G. Jones, \$25; Martin Vaughan, \$10; E. S. Lovelace, \$25; I. Edmondson, \$10; J. H. Gallehon, \$25; Miss Maggie Carson, \$18; Miss Clem Young, \$18; N. Shelton, \$10; William Carson donated 150 acres of land. Valuing the land at \$150.00, the total subscriptions amounted to \$576.00.

To my mind, this session is epochal, for it marked the end of dreaming and the beginning of realization of dreams. For a generation the people of this section had been thinking about establishing a school, but they had gotten no further than that. Now they take steps to secure the sort of school they had been dreaming about.

In 1874 the association met with Forest Home Church, in Ashe County, on October 8th. Elder I. W. Thomas preached the introductory sermons and Elder J. J. L. Sherwood was again elected moderator. Elder W. C. Parks was chosen clerk and treasurer. One new church, Pleasant Home, was received into the association, and many Baptist leaders from other associations were invited to seats in the body, among them being I. W. Thomas, of the Brushy Mountain Association; J. F. Maiden and Dr. Houston, from the Lebanon Association; B. G. Maynard, a professor in Bristol Female College; Elder E. F. Jones from the Watauga Association; J. H. Garvey and M. Campbell from the Brushy Mountain Association, and Elder A. Powers from the Mountain Union Association.

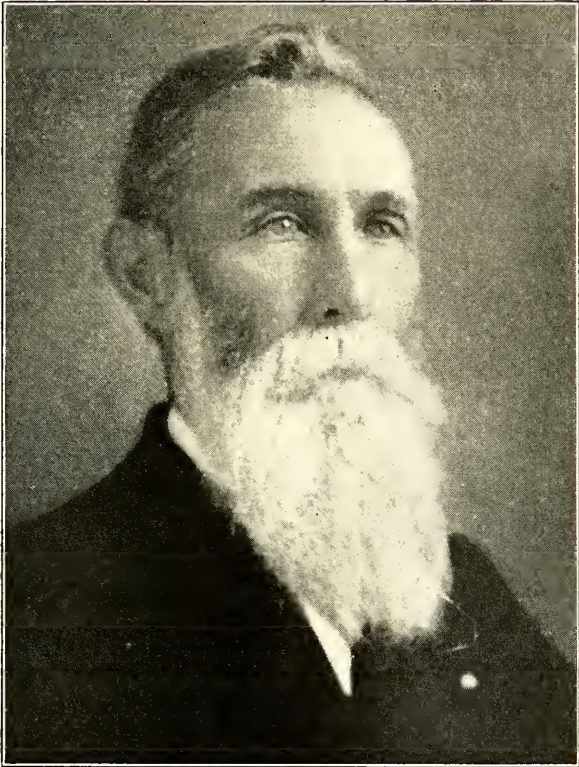
It is recorded that following the report on missions by A. S. Murray, the association pledged \$100 to state missions and \$34 for foreign missions. J. H. Perkins offered the report on education which was followed by a discussion of the needs of Oak Hill Academy and a total of \$152.50 was pledged for it. On motion of W. C. Parks, J. H. Perkins was elected trustee of the school, succeeding Elder J. B. Jones, who had moved out of the association.

I did not have the pleasure of meeting J. B. Jones but I heard much about him. He was pastor of the church at Independence, Va., which was later moved out of town to a site two miles south of town on Brush Creek and renamed Brush Creek Church. Whence he came and whither he went I have never known. He was a small man physically, not tall enough to stand behind the old-fashioned pulpits of his day and see his congregations over them. He was a great Sunday school worker and organizer. He organized a Sunday school at old Beaver Creek Church in Ashe County, an anti-missionary church, in 1871 or 1872. Afterwards I attended this Sunday school, walking about two miles in order to do so. I was just a boy of 11 or 12 years, but that Sunday school made an indelible impression upon my mind and shaped my destiny. I thank God for J. B. Jones and for the little old-fashioned Sunday school that he established.

We find in the statistical tables of this and the preceding sessions, two churches in Carroll County, Virginia, Hebron and Pickett's, organized by Alex Stamey. These churches disappeared and in the following session of the association some one asked Stamey what had become of his little churches. He said:

"The Hard-shells, the Methodists, Tom Stone (a so-called Campbellite preacher) and the devil got among 'em and scattered 'em to the four corners of the earth."

In 1875 the association met with Pleasant Home Church, in Ashe County, beginning on September 2nd. Elder Alex Stamey preached the opening sermon and Elders Sherwood and Parks were re-elected moderator and clerk, respectively. At this session Baptist Chapel asked for a letter of dismissal and it was granted. We find that this church went over to the Mountain Union Baptist Association the next year and remained in that association until 1924, when it applied for membership in the Ashe County Association and was received. This is one of the



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notable old churches of Ashe County, with an interesting history. As I have already stated, it was organized in 1842 by Elders B. Roby and Stephen Ross and it was the first distinctively missionary church to be organized in Ashe County after the "great split" of 1836 to 1838. Baptist Chapel did not remain in the latter association.

The association at this session showed considerable interest in Oak Hill Academy and pledges were made for it amounting to \$224.00. This session is notable for the fact that it brought into Ashe County and Grayson County a very capable preacher and faithful servant of God, Elder I. W. Thomas, a native of Alexander County. Acting favorably upon the recommendation of James Eller, of the executive committee, the association voted to employ Elder Thomas as associational missionary and individual pledges were taken for his support amounting to \$130.00. He had only recently come to Ashe County and had married Miss Julia Garvey. He did splendid work in the association. He later moved to Caldwell County and died there a few years ago after having served his day and generation well and faithfully to a ripe old age. He was an outspoken friend of missions and of every good cause.

The minutes of this session show no contributions for missions, for pastors' salaries or for any other cause except "printing minutes." Only two Sunday schools were reported, though there were probably more. These were Forest Home, with thirty students and Galena with fifty. A total church membership of 767 was reported, a gain in three years of 286.

The association adjourned to meet the following year with White Top Church, but for some reason not set out in the minutes, the 1876 session met on October 5th at Young's Chapel Church in Grayson County. The introductory sermon was preached by Elder J. J. L. Sherwood. He was again elected moderator and Elder W. C. Parks was re-elected clerk.

The principal theme of this session appears to have been education. A strong report on the subject by Elder W. C. Parks was followed by the taking of individual pledges for Oak Hill Academy amounting to \$124.00. Two trustees for the school were named at this session, to-wit:

William Carson to succeed William Barker and William Halsey, to succeed J. H. Perkins, deceased.

Three agents were appointed to collect funds for Oak Hill Academy, as follows:

S. D. Moore, for the lower end of the association; Elder W. C. Parks, for the middle section, and James Eller for the upper end.

Elder I. W. Thomas, associational missionary, made a notable report, very pleasing to the association, and was continued for another year. Ten pastors reported having received salaries aggregating \$246.80, an average of \$24.68 each. The highest salary reported was \$50.00 and the lowest \$7.13. The association reported having given \$83.80 for home missions, meaning "associational missions." Six churches reported Sunday schools, with 251 pupils.

The seventh annual session of the New River Association was held with Galena Church, beginning October 4, 1877. The same officers were re-elected and Elder W. C. Parks preached the opening sermon. As at previous sessions, much time was devoted to education and it is noteworthy that at this session, following a strong sermon on the subject by Elder Sherwood, a collection amounting to \$10.75 was taken for foreign missions. I know that to the present generation, accustomed to thinking in terms of hundreds and thousands of dollars, the figures that I give in this narrative from time to time appear trivial and of small importance, but it must be borne in mind that I am telling the story of the beginning of things and that in those days people had not learned to give freely. In fact, there was little to give in those hard days following the Civil War and a gift of \$10 then was equal to a gift of many, many times ten dollars today. It is also noted at this session that the churches of the association had given a total of \$14.50 for foreign missions.

Eight churches reported having paid their pastors a total of \$40 and the lowest \$6.92. This last amount was paid to me by my first church. I was then a boy-preacher, eighteen years of age, and in order to serve my first church I travelled sixteen miles, or thirty-two miles per round trip, twelve times per year.

The churches of the association reported fifty-four baptisms during the year and five churches reported Sunday schools with 254 pupils.

The 1878 session, which was held with White Top Church, beginning August 22nd, was marked by continued interest in Oak Hill Academy. The same officers were re-elected and Elder A. Stamey was the introductory preacher. At this session the name of Elder J. F. Maiden appears in the minutes, he having been

selected to serve as associational missionary following the session of 1877. He made his report for the year and was re-elected.

At this time the association reported a total membership of 799. Four of the churches reported Sunday-schools with 206 members and nine churches reported pastors' salaries aggregating \$168.68, the highest being \$31.85 and the lowest \$3.75. This latter amount was not the salary paid by my church, as the figures show that my church paid me \$5.37 that year.

The ninth annual session of the New River Association met with Mount Pleasant Church, six miles north of Jefferson, in Ashe County, on September 5, 1879. Elder L. D. Vaughan preached the introductory sermon. James Eller was elected moderator and L. N. Perkins clerk and treasurer. It is worthy of note that for the first time laymen came to the fore-front and were honored by election to the highest posts in the association, these two fine Baptist laymen succeeding Elders J. J. L. Sherwood and W. C. Parks who had been at the helm continuously for the preceding eight sessions of the association.

At this session State Line Church, in Taylor's Valley, Tennessee and Virginia, was admitted to the association. Elder J. F. Maiden presented his report as associational missionary and was continued for another year, the churches and individuals pledging \$100 for his support. Following report on education by H. A. Eller, the association went on record as endorsing Wake Forest and Richmond Colleges and Oak Hill Academy, but no pledges were taken for Oak Hill. R. W. Young was appointed trustee of Oak Hill Academy succeeding A. J. Greer, who had moved out of the association's bounds.

Ten churches reported having paid their pastors \$210.89, the highest salary being \$38.80 and the lowest \$6.60. Eight churches reported Sunday schools with a total of 453 pupils. There were at this time seven ordained preachers in the association and seven licentiates.

The association closed with a great sermon by Elder J. J. L. Sherwood, which I still recall with pleasure. His subject was "The Transfiguration" and he handled it in masterly fashion, making a deep impression on his audience.

The tenth annual session of the association met with Apple Grove Church in Ashe County on September 2, 1880. The introductory sermon was preached by Elder William Fisher. Elder S. Blackburn was elected moderator and Elder W. C. Parks was

elected clerk and treasurer. At this session there were reported the deaths of W. W. Fuqua, first principal of Oak Hill Academy; Elder Stephen Ross and Elder W. P. Long, all of them strong men of God, who left their impress upon their times. Elder Ross, as has already been told here, was instrumental in organizing many churches of the association and the Baptists are greatly indebted to him for his wonderful pioneer work in our mountains. The association passed suitable resolutions concerning them.

At this meeting the association met for the first time J. F. Spainhour, the new principal of Oak Hill Academy, a man who was destined to mean so much to that institution in the years that were to come. He was one of the really great educators of his day, a man who loved teaching and was born to it. He set Oak Hill upon a high plane and by the force of his intellect and fine personality, kept it there through years of disappointments, discouragements and troubles. It is good to be able to record that his interest in education has not lessened with the years and that he stands out today as a leader in educational circles of the State of North Carolina. He is now State Senator from his district and made a splendid record at the 1927 session of the North Carolina General Assembly.

From the minutes we find that in 1880 the association had 886 members, in sixteen churches. Eleven of these churches paid their pastors salaries aggregating \$203.44, the highest salary being \$36.90 and the lowest \$2.32. Eight churches had Sunday schools with 369 pupils.

The eleventh session of the association met with Liberty Hill Church, in Grayson County, on September 2, 1881. Elders J. J. L. Sherwood and W. C. Parks were elected moderator and clerk, respectively, and the introductory sermon was preached by Elder W. R. L. Smith, a delegate from the General Association of Virginia. Elder J. T. Kincannon, D.D., was present as a delegate from the same association; Elder William Fisher, from the Appomattox Association, in Virginia; Prof. J. F. Spainhour, from the Brushy Mountain Association, and J. S. Poe, from the Raleigh Association, in North Carolina.

While there is no record of his appointment at the previous session, we find Elder William Fisher making his report as associational missionary, succeeding Elder J. F. Maiden.

At this session Elder A. Stamey proposed a plan for the erection of a missionary Baptist church on his lands, offering to donate the lands for it. The plan was approved and donations pledged by those present sufficient to insure the erection of the building. Snow Hill Baptist Church, in the lower end of Grayson County, Virginia, is the result of this movement and is a monument to this noble, generous and faithful servant of God. He sleeps today in the grave-yard at this church, under a beautiful monument erected by his children, which bears no record of his having been a Baptist minister or of his having been the founder of this church.

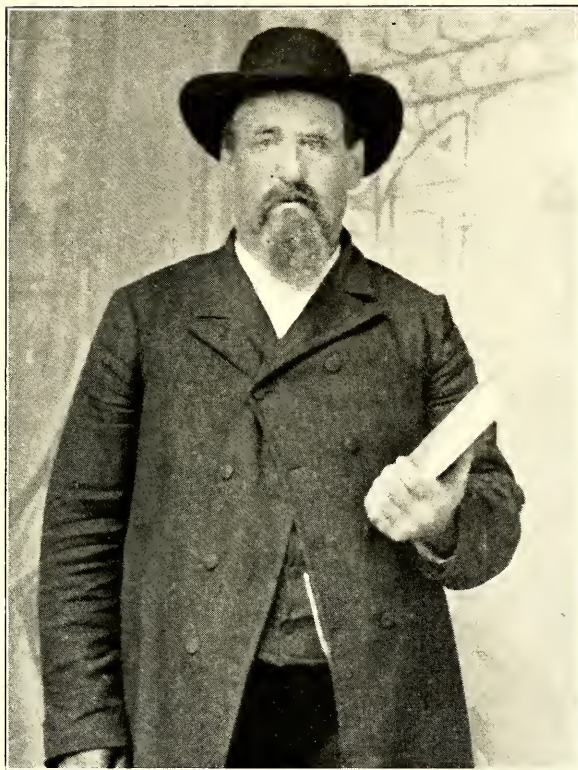
The association had at this time seventeen churches, with 852 members and six Sunday schools, with 314 pupils. There had been thirty-six baptisms during the year and Elder Fisher, the associational missionary, had been paid \$127.30 and had preached one hundred sermons in the association.

The session of 1882 met with Grubbs Chapel Church in Grayson County. Elder A. Stamey preached the opening sermon and Elder W. C. Parks, who had served so long as clerk, was elected moderator. W. H. Blevins was elected clerk and treasurer.

I was greatly interested in Blevins, for the reason that he was converted under my ministry when I was just a boy and he asked to be the first person to be baptized by me. I baptized him in Big Horse Creek on February 11, 1877. He was the son of a splendid Baptist minister, Armstrong Blevins, who died on June 14, 1868. I have already mentioned his connection with the work in this section and his passing.

Two new churches were received at this session, these being New Hope Church, in Alleghany County, and Laurel Church, in Smythe County, Virginia.

R. F. Young and L. D. Vaughan were appointed trustees of Oak Hill Academy, succeeding Elder J. J. L. Sherwood and W. A. Carson, who had moved out of the association. At this point, Elder Sherwood, who had served the cause faithfully and effectively as associational missionary and pastor of various churches and who for nearly ten years had served as moderator of the association, passes out of our history. He moved to Watauga County, North Carolina, where he soon took equally high rank among the Baptists of that county and for many years was one of the leading pastors of the Three Forks Association. He had much to do with the making of this great association,



REV. J. J. L. SHERWOOD

which deserves a history of its own and I hope that some day it will be written. When it is written, much space will be devoted to this good man.

The minutes for this session show that the association had a total membership of 822. There had been forty-four additions during the year by baptism and all of the churches reported \$456.47 paid to pastors, the highest receiving \$30 and the lowest \$2.70. Small amounts were reported for State Missions, Home Missions, Board of Education, Sunday School and Bible Board and Foreign Missions, the amounts ranging from 93 cents for ministerial relief to \$5.86 for foreign missions. I do not give these figures by way of criticism of the churches or of the preachers of this day. Our people were not informed on these subjects and our preachers did not know how to present them intelligently. I have already made mention of the poverty of our people in those hard days and it goes without saying that the full force of hard times fell upon the preachers of those days. It would have required a full measure of grace, grit and courage in a preacher whose family was suffering for the bare necessities of life and whose salary was anywhere between \$2.70 and \$10.00 per year, to have pressed upon his congregations the matter of giving to missions, etc. It should be remembered that the average church in that day and time was against giving to any cause.

However, some of us learned that the way to success and to better salaries lay through constantly preaching the gospel of giving, not only for the needs of the immediate community but for the work of the Baptists in the State, in the Nation and in foreign fields. When Baptists began to realize their responsibilities for the saving of the world, they began to take better care of their preachers.

The 1883 session of the association was held with Forest Home Church, beginning on October 4th. Elder L. D. Vaughan preached the introductory sermon. Elder W. C. Parks was elected moderator and H. A. Eller, clerk and treasurer. One new church, Wytheville Baptist Church, of Wythe County, Virginia, was admitted at this session.

Elders A. S. Murray and L. D. Vaughan made their reports as associational missionaries. There had been fifty-seven baptisms during the year and the total membership was 961. No mention was made in the minutes of this session as to Sunday schools.

An incident of this session is worthy of mention here. James Eller presented a very strong report on foreign missions and it was followed by a discussion that aroused great interest. In the midst of it a young preacher jumped to his feet and said:

“Let’s take up a collection for foreign missions. I have but fifty cents in the world and I want to give that right now.”

His enthusiasm was contagious. Many wept and when the hat was passed, there was collected more than the entire association had ever given for foreign missions in one year before that time.

In 1884 the association met with Baptist Union Church in Grayson County, the session beginning on September 4th, with the introductory sermon by Elder J. F. Fletcher, from the text II Cor. 4:5. The officers of the previous year were re-elected.

One new church entered at this session, this being Snow Hill Church in Grayson County, mention of which has already been made. Its letter was presented by its organizer, Elder A. Stamey, who invited the association to meet with the new church the next year. The invitation was accepted. One church, New Hope, asked for and was granted a letter of dismissal.

Elders Murray and Vaughan, associational missionaries, made their reports for the year. Elder Vaughan had received from the churches \$31.45 for his services and Elder Murray \$44.50. There had been eighty-five baptisms during the year and the total membership of the association was 1,074, in twenty-one churches. Thirteen churches reported Sunday schools with 661 pupils. There were thirteen ordained ministers in the association and five licentiates. A total of \$62.63 had been contributed to all of the boards.

In September, 1885, the association held its fifteenth annual session with Snow Hill Church and Rev. W. C. Parks preached the opening sermon. I use the prefix “Rev.” here for the reason that the clerk uses it in his minutes and I have used “Elder” for the same reason, and will continue to use them in the same way.

The officers of the previous year were re-elected. No business of importance was reported at this session. Twelve churches reported Sunday schools with 656 pupils and the total membership of the association was 1,101, there having been added by baptism during the year 101 persons.

The sixteenth annual session was held with White Top Church, in Grayson County, beginning on September 3rd, 1886. Rev.

C. J. Woodson preached the opening sermon, Rev. W. C. Parks was elected moderator, and J. R. Hicks was elected clerk and treasurer.

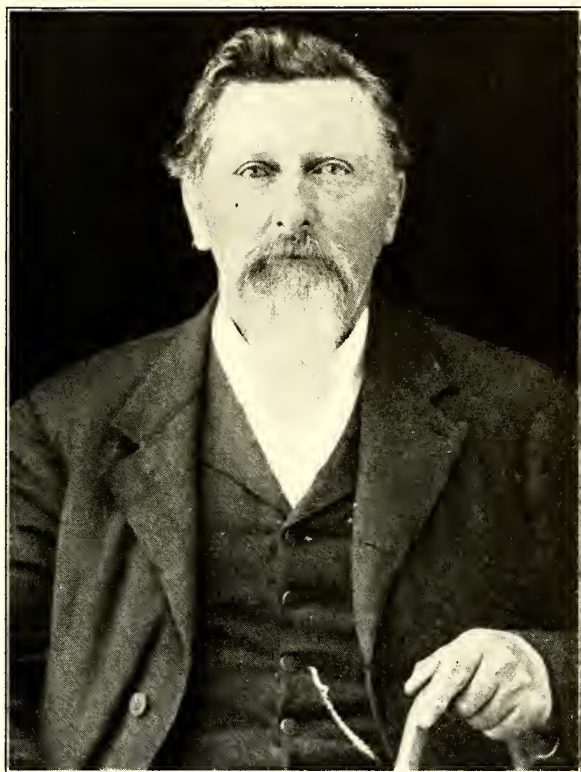
One new church, Rural Glen, was received at this session and letters of dismission were granted to Landmark, Forest Home and Mount Pleasant, these churches withdrawing for the purpose of entering into the organization of the Ashe and Alleghany Association.

The statistical tables for this year show that there had been a total of seventy-nine baptisms during the year and that the churches comprising the association had 1,112 members. Twelve churches reported Sunday schools with 724 members. Fourteen churches reported having paid their pastors \$281.06 and the associational missionary had been paid \$78.20. The association had increased its gifts to missions and other causes.

The seventeenth annual session of the New River Association met with Pleasant Home Church in Ashe County on September 1, 1887, and the introductory sermon was preached by Elder L. D. Vaughan. Elder W. C. Parks was made moderator and Elder E. W. Rudy was elected clerk and treasurer.

The Wytheville Church was dismissed to join the Lebanon Association. Mount Pleasant Church, which had withdrawn from the association the previous year for the purpose of entering the Ashe and Alleghany Association, made application for reinstatement. This church had been unable to secure membership in the Ashe and Alleghany for the reason that it could not, or rather would not, comply with an article in the constitution of the Ashe and Alleghany Association which denied membership to any church that held in fellowship a member who drank spirituous liquors as a beverage, or engaged in the manufacture and sale of such liquors. The Mt. Pleasant Church had one or more influential members who were actively engaged in the liquor business. When these matters were explained to the New River Association, that body very wisely refused to re-admit Mt. Pleasant Church.

With the doors of both associations closed against it and with no other churches extending fellowship to its members, the Mt. Pleasant Church soon went out of existence. Some of its members went to Landmark Church and others joined in the organization of Healing Springs Church.



REV. L. D. VAUGHAN

All of the fifteen churches of the association were represented and they reported seventy-three baptisms during the year. The total membership was 924. Elders G. M. Burcham and L. D. Vaughan, associational missionaries, presented their reports for the year. Preaching during this session was done by Elders L. D. Vaughan, G. M. Burcham, J. R. Robbins and T. M. Honeycutt.

The 1888 session met with Rural Glen Church, near Independence, Virginia, on August 30th. Elder J. M. Pilcher, secretary of the Sunday School and Bible Board, Richmond, Virginia, preached the introductory sermon. Elder L. D. Vaughan was elected moderator and W. W. Lovelace was made clerk and treasurer. Two new churches, Corinth and Haw Orchard, were received and all of the churches were represented. Pleasant Home Church was granted a letter of dismission to join the Ashe and Alleghany Association. Elder A. S. Murray and Elder L. D. Vaughan were appointed missionaries, the latter to labor in Carroll County and the first-named in Grayson County. W. G. Young, presenting the report on missionary work in the association, had recommended strongly that "the missionaries be confined to smaller fields until they are thoroughly cultivated." Being a farmer and one of the best of his day, he used the phraseology of a farmer to point out a mistake that the association was making and it is evident, in the instructions to the two missionaries just referred to, that the association did not fail to get the point and that they saw things as he did.

On September 10, 1889, the association met in its nineteenth session with White Top Church and Rev. D. J. Harris preached the introductory sermon. Rev. W. C. Parks was re-elected moderator and Isaac Edmondson was elected clerk and treasurer. Among the visiting ministers at this session were noted D. J. Harris and J. F. Maiden, of the Lebanon Association; I. M. Carter, E. Tucker, Creed Roberts and J. F. Fletcher, from the Ashe and Alleghany Association, and W. W. White from the Brushy Mountain Association.

The association "heartily endorsed the Sunday school and Bible Board and our colporter, W. J. Satterfield." All of the reports at this session are incomplete. Only ten churches were represented.

The twentieth session of the association, which met at Young's Chapel Church, at Oak Hill, on September 4, 1890, found fifteen churches represented and there were present several notable

visitors, among them being Prof. Edmond Harrison of Richmond College; Rev. Samuel Sanders of the Valley Association; Rev. D. A. Glenn, Rev. J. F. Maiden, Judge A. P. Cole, Rev. Noah C. Baldwin, M. D. Houston and M. M. Morris of the Lebanon Association; Rev. D. S. Hubbel of the Appomattox Association; Rev. J. J. L. Sherwood, Prof. J. F. Spainhour and N. H. Shipley of the Three Forks Association; Rev. D. M. Stamper, Rev. E. W. Reedy, Rev. W. H. Gwaltney and W. C. Fields of the Ashe and Alleghany Association, and Rev. W. J. Satterfield of the Blue Ridge Association.

Rev. W. C. Parks was again elected moderator and I. N. Young was elected clerk and treasurer. Rev. D. S. Hubbel preached the introductory sermon.

Snow Hill Church sent up the following query:

“Shall we receive members into our church from the Methodist Church without re-baptizing them?”

To this query the following very positive answer was returned:

“Your committee cannot see the propriety of a discussion of this subject but would refer any one, and especially Snow Hill Church, to the Bible and to the practice and history of the Baptist church as a guide and would answer:

“No—never.”

The reports submitted at this session were of very high order and showed marked improvement in the matter of pastors' salaries and contributions to missions. The association had a membership of 846 and had received by baptism during the year seventy-eight members.

The 1891 session of the association met with Snow Hill Church, on September 3rd. Rev. L. D. Vaughan was elected moderator and Rev. J. F. Fletcher clerk and treasurer. Sixteen churches were represented.

Following the report on state missions, which was of unusual interest and aroused considerable enthusiastic discussion, delegates from fifteen churches pledged \$96.00 for the cause.

Rev. J. H. Lewellen, of the Yadkin Association, submitted the report on temperance and the following resolution was adopted:

“Resolved, That we, the New River Association, will not hold in our communion any church that holds in its communion any member who manufactures, deals in or drinks, ardent spirits as a beverage.”

A resolution was passed heartily endorsing the efforts of Rev. J. F. Fletcher, who had come into the association from the Ashe and Alleghany Association during the year, toward erecting a house of worship and establishing a Baptist church at Independence, the county seat of Grayson County. It was announced that Col. J. W. Vaughan and wife had donated a desirable lot in the town of Independence for the new church and the association gave them a vote of thanks and appreciation for the gift. The delegates present pledged a total of \$1,100.00 for the building. The building campaign was entirely successful, resulting in the erection of a commodious brick church, the best within the bounds of the association, and a credit to the Baptists of the county-seat.

According to reports submitted at this session, the association had nine ordained ministers and four licentiates. The total membership was 975 and there had been added by baptism during the year ninety-six. Five Sunday schools were reported, with a total membership of 322.

The twenty-second annual session of the association met with Grubbs Chapel Church on Sept. 1, 1892, and the officers of the previous year were re-elected. When the roll of churches was called it was found that all of the churches were represented by letters and delegates and three new churches, Friendship, Independence and Valley View, presented credentials and asked for membership in the association. They were received with great enthusiasm, the large congregation of delegates and visitors rising and singing, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name."

This session was marked by preaching of very high order by Rev. D. S. Hubbel of the Appomattox Association; Rev. Elihu Tucker of the Ashe and Alleghany Association; Rev. J. J. L. Sherwood of the Three Forks Association; Rev. J. M. McMannaway of the Clinch Valley Association; Rev. J. T. Fowlkes of the Mountain Union Association, and Rev. V. P'Anson of the Lebanon Association.

The executive committee of the association, composed of J. D. Perkins, M. B. Young and G. W. Brewer, made the following report:

"J. F. Fletcher has been secured as missionary and for the ten months ending August 31st, has preached 156 sermons, has religiously visited 172 families, has travelled 1,500

miles, and has organized two churches. He has witnessed thirty-seven professions of religion, baptized nine and has collected for the boards, including the orphanage, \$101.00."

Every heart was saddened by the announcement at this session that Rev. W. C. Parks, a leading spirit in the association from its organization, had died during the year. A committee was named to draft an obituary of this good man, the committee being composed of J. L. Young, J. D. Perkins and R. F. Young.

During the year the association had received by baptism seventy-seven members and the total membership was 1,076. The total value of church property was placed at \$4,500. Twelve churches reported Sunday schools with 638 teachers and pupils.

The 1893 session of the association was held with Liberty Hill Church, beginning on August 31st. M. B. Young was elected moderator and I. N. Young clerk and treasurer. The introductory sermon was preached by Rev. Samuel Saunders.

At this meeting a motion was made that the association dispose of Oak Hill Academy but the motion was lost. The executive committee reported that satisfactory progress was being made toward building the new church at Independence; that J. F. Fletcher had been retained as missionary and that they had made an unsuccessful effort to secure a colporter for this field.

This session was marked by the first successful effort at organizing an effective Women's Missionary Union for the New River Association. The session was also marked by splendid sermons and addresses by visiting ministers, among these being Rev. V. P'Anson of the Lebanon Association; Rev. Samuel Saunders of the Valley Association, and Rev. H. C. Bookholtz of Chester, S. C. The first Women's Missionary Union was organized at Young's Chapel by J. F. Fletcher, Mrs. I. N. Young, president; Miss S. J. LaRue, secretary.

Reports to the association showed a falling off in contributions to missions but a considerable increase in salaries of pastors. The total membership of the association was 1,159 and there had been ninety-nine baptisms during the year.

The twenty-fourth annual session of the association met with Corinth Church on August 31, 1894, and the introductory sermon was preached by Rev. C. M. Mikell. Rev. W. F. Brannock was elected moderator and Rev. J. F. Fletcher clerk and treasurer. The practice of reading church letters to the association was dispensed with by the adoption of a motion changing

the constitution in this respect and a delegate from each church was called upon to make report on the spiritual condition of his church. The reports submitted by these delegates were not encouraging. Twenty of the twenty-three churches in the association were represented and two new churches, Blue Ridge Chapel and Flat Ridge, were received.

Friendship Church sent in the following query:

“Is foot-washing a church ordinance?”

The regular order of business was dispensed with and the matter was discussed by several speakers, after which the query was answered in the negative.

Valley View Church was granted a letter of dismissal. Strong sermons were preached during the sessions by Rev. C. M. Mikell, Rev. J. W. Hundley, Rev. J. A. Taylor, Rev. E. F. Kane and Rev. W. F. Barker. The total membership of the association was 1,136, and there had been sixty-five additions through baptism. Twelve churches reported Sunday schools with 725 members.

The 1895 session of the association met with Baptist Union Church on August 29th. The officers of the previous year were re-elected and Rev. C. F. Fields preached the introductory sermon.

One new church, Hebron, in Carroll County, was received into the association. Seventy-four baptisms had been administered during the year and the total membership was 1,142. Thirteen churches reported Sunday schools with 662 pupils and teachers. Visiting ministers, C. F. Fields, T. J. Davenport and C. T. Taylor, preached during the sessions.

In 1896 the association met with Independence Church. Rev. C. T. Taylor preached the introductory sermon and the association got down to business after electing M. B. Young moderator and J. F. Fletcher clerk and treasurer. Twenty-three of the twenty-four churches in the association were represented and one new church, Grosse's Creek Church, Smythe County, Virginia, was received, upon condition. This church had been organized by Rev. Elihu Tucker on September 5, 1895, with eleven members and it had as assistant pastor, Rev. Ambrose Weaver, a Methodist preacher. The condition was that the church remove its assistant pastor.

Among the visitors at this session were Rev. C. T. Taylor of the Lebanon Association, and Rev. H. M. Fugate of Richmond

College, who were later to labor effectively in the association. William Ellyson, corresponding secretary of the Baptist State Mission Board, was also present.

While this meeting was not marked by anything out of the ordinary, only routine business engaging its attention, the sessions were all interesting and worth while. On Sunday there were three sermons by Baptist ministers in the little town of Independence. Rev. J. W. Burchett of the Elkin Association, preached at the Baptist Church. Rev. J. W. Hundley preached at the Methodist Church and Rev. H. M. Fugate preached at the Academy.

The total membership of the association at this session was 1,251 and there had been 147 baptisms during the year.

The twenty-seventh annual session of the association met with State Line Church, in the edge of Johnson County, Tennessee, on September 2, 1897, and the introductory sermon was preached by Rev. W. F. Brannock. Twenty-three churches were represented. Rev. W. F. Brannock was elected moderator and Rev. J. F. Fletcher was re-elected clerk and treasurer.

Grosse's Creek Church reported that it had complied with the instructions received at the 1896 session of the association and had dismissed its assistant pastor, who was a Methodist. One new church, Kyle's Chapel, from Wythe County, was received. This church was constituted by Rev. T. R. Fulton, who left the Methodist church and joined the Baptists. He figured largely in this meeting but he went back to the Methodists after a few years and the church which he brought into the association disappeared from the minutes of the New River Association.

As is related elsewhere in the story of the Ashe and Alleghany Association, there had been for some time a movement for a new association and it came to a head at this meeting. Brush Creek Church, formerly known as Rural Glen and Galena Church, asked for letters of dismission to join the new association to be known as the Alleghany and Grayson Association and the letters were granted.

The executive committee reported that the association had had the services during the preceding year of three missionaries, these being J. F. Fletcher, W. F. Brannock and T. R. Fulton. In addition, W. A. Hash had served effectively as colporter for two months. There had been eighty-eight baptisms during the year and sixteen churches reported Sunday schools with 804 members.

The association met the following year with Snow Hill Church in Grayson County, Virginia, on August 25th. The officers of the previous year were re-elected and Rev. T. R. Fulton preached the introductory sermon. Twenty-one of the twenty-four churches of the association were represented. Two new churches, Gold Hill and Iron Ridge, were admitted at this session.

This session of the association was marked by unusual interest in the Baptist Orphanage at Salem, Virginia. Eleven churches pledged varying amounts for its support and promised to send boxes of clothing and supplies to the institution. At this session the work of the Baptist Young People's Union got its first recognition in the association, Mr. J. H. LaRue presenting a report on it and making a strong appeal for it.

The total membership for the year was 1,203, after having withdrawn fellowship from Mountain View and having dismissed by letter Brush Creek and Galena.

The twenty-ninth annual session of the association was held with Grubbs Chapel Church, beginning on August 24, 1899. Nineteen of the twenty-two churches in the association were represented. The same officers were re-elected and Rev. R. M. Leftwich preached the introductory sermon. Pleasant Grove Church asked for and was granted a letter of dismission and the name of Mt. Carmel Church was dropped from the roll.

The condition of Mt. Carmel Church had been discussed at previous sessions and a committee had been named to make an investigation. This committee reported that the church had very few members and held no regular services and that another denomination held their property.

This session was made notable by the presence of Miss Daisy Hutson of Richmond, Virginia, who came to the association for the purpose of interesting the women in the work of the Woman's Missionary Union. Miss Hutson conducted a meeting of the women in a school house, near the church, arousing much interest in the work.

The thirtieth annual session was held at Young's Chapel Church, beginning on August 23, 1900. It was marked by a new feature on the opening day, a formal address of welcome by J. D. Perkins and a response by Rev. J. M. Dunaway of the Lebanon Association. Rev. W. F. Brannock was re-elected moderator and W. A. Hash was elected clerk and treasurer.

Corinth Church asked for and was granted a letter of dismission and a committee was named to investigate Wingate's Chapel,

which had not been represented in the association for several sessions.

The association met the following year with Fellowship Church, the session beginning on August 29th, 1901, with an introductory sermon by Rev. H. M. Fugate. Fourteen of the twenty-one churches in the association were represented and there were many notable visitors, among them being J. D. Pilcher, D.D., corresponding secretary of the Sunday School and Bible Board, Petersburg, Virginia; Rev. J. M. Dunaway, pastor of the church at Marion, Virginia; Prof. S. C. Mitchell of Richmond College; D. J. Eaton of the Atlantic Association; E. W. Reedy of the Ashe Association; T. R. Windsor of the Alleghany and Grayson Association; Marshall B. Young of the Stone Mountain Association, Georgia.

The association went on record at this session as opposing the union of church and state in any manner whatsoever. The matter was brought up in a discussion concerning the use of public funds in the support of sectarian schools and institutions, a matter that was being widely discussed at the time and which was to come up for consideration before the Virginia Constitutional Convention soon to be called. After a full discussion, the following resolution was adopted:

“Whereas, we believe that the practice of using public money for the use of schools or other institutions under sectarian control is thoroughly un-American and is, in its very essence, tyranny;

“Resolved, First that we, the delegates representing the churches of the New River Association, very earnestly request our representatives in the Constitutional Convention to use their utmost efforts to secure such provisions in the new Constitution as may be necessary to prevent such appropriations.”

The association named a committee to lay the matter before the proper authorities.

The committee named at the preceding session to investigate Wingate Chapel reported that that church had been dissolved and its name was dropped from the roll.

It was reported that two missionaries had been employed during the year, Rev. C. M. Rock, at Independence, and Rev. H. M. Fugate in the upper end of the association.

The thirty-second annual meeting of the association was held with White Top Church, beginning on September 4th, 1902, with an introductory sermon by Rev. C. M. Rock. Fifteen churches out of twenty-one in the association, were represented. R. W. Young was elected moderator and W. A. Hash was re-elected clerk and treasurer.

Among the notable visitors at this session were J. P. Saul of the Valley Association; T. R. Windsor of the Alleghany and Grayson Association; E. W. Reedy and W. F. Barker of the Ashe Association; J. F. Maiden of the Lebanon Association, and A. C. Hamby, editor of *The Blue Ridge Baptist*, North Wilkesboro, N. C.

Reports from the churches for this year showed unusual progress along all lines. The churches had paid to all of the boards \$380.98, making an increase of 50 per cent over the preceding year, and they had made an equally fine gain in pastors' salaries. There had been sixty-six received by baptism and the total membership was 1,015, after Grosse's Creek, with fifty members, had been granted a letter of dismissal. A spirit of optimism pervaded the sessions and every meeting was uplifting and helpful. Commenting on the sessions, Rev. J. F. Maiden, for several years a missionary in the association, said:

"I couldn't hear all that was being said. I am eighty years old and my hearing has failed, but I could tell by the expressions on the faces of those round about me that it was one of the best associations that I ever attended."

This splendid old servant of God preached during the sessions and was the recipient of much attention on the part of the delegates. His home was in Smythe County, Virginia, where he died a few years later. He was deeply interested in the work in the New River Association and attended its annual sessions as long as he was physically able to do so.

The next session of the association was held at Liberty Hill Church, beginning on September 1, 1903, with the introductory sermon by Rev. C. T. Taylor. Twelve churches were represented, the smallest number reporting in many years, but these twelve made reports that were heartening and encouraging in every respect. Eleven out of the twelve reported Sunday schools with total enrollment of 629 and every one of the twelve reported liberal contributions to the church boards.

This fine condition was due, in my opinion, to the splendid work done by Rev. H. M. Fugate, who had come to the association as missionary in 1901 and who had been active along these lines. Mr. Fugate was well educated, full of energy, spiritually minded, a faithful servant of God and his work still lives in the territory of the New River Association.

Another force for good, which had helped to bring about these conditions, was the work done by John W. Barker as colporter for the association. The following extracts from his report for the previous year show the nature of his work and are worthy of being recorded here:

Days actually employed, 120; families visited, 333; persons habitually neglecting attendance upon preaching, 328; families destitute of the Bible, 58; families destitute of other religious books, 131; number of adults in 333 families, 930; number of children in 333 families, 773; Baptists in 333 families, 271; Methodists, 229; adults in no church, 452; children over seven in no church, 408; children in no Sunday school, 457; adults in no Sunday school, 672.

The report showed that a great deal of good literature, including religious books, tracts and pamphlets, had been distributed by the colporter during the year.

Committees were named to visit all of the churches that were not represented at the association. Among the visitors who were recognized during the sessions were Rev. J. F. Maiden, Rev. C. T. Taylor, and Rev. W. N. Britten of the Lebanon Association; T. R. Windsor of the Alleghany and Grayson Association; Rev. S. S. Weatherly, prominent Methodist minister; Marshall B. Young of Atlanta, Georgia, and Rev. Albert G. Hash of Birmingham, Alabama.

Albert Hash preached one of the sermons at this session and made a profound impression on those who heard him. He was a native of Grayson County, a brother of Rev. Walter A. Hash. He was converted under my ministry and I baptized both him and his brother, Walter. Walter Hash's work in the New River Association, where he has served as missionary, as pastor and as principal of Oak Hill Academy and has wielded a commending influence for many years, is well known, but Albert passed out of the picture early and comparatively few remember him.

I think that Albert Hash was easily one of the foremost young ministers of his day. He left the mountains and went to How-

ard College in Alabama, where he graduated with honors, and soon thereafter became pastor of one of the great Baptist churches of Birmingham, Ala. He died in the eighth year of his pastorate there, in the prime of his young manhood and at the zenith of his power and influence.

Writing of him, it comes to my mind to write also of another son of the mountains, whom I loved as one of my own sons, and who died in his youth, T. F. Edmondson of the White Top section. He was the son of Dr. I. Edmondson and a nephew of the E. Edmondson who figured in the work of the Jefferson Association. He was an eloquent young preacher, of great promise, and he left his impress upon the Baptists of Grayson County.

The thirty-fourth annual session of the New River Association met on August 30, 1904, with Young's Chapel Church. Rev. T. F. Edmondson, above referred to, had been chosen to preach the introductory sermon, but he was unable to attend because of illness, and Rev. C. W. Trainham of Marion, Virginia, supplied for him.

Only thirteen of the twenty churches in the association presented letters and committees were named to visit all churches not represented by delegates, these being Hebron, Iron Ridge, Haw Orchard, Independence, Gold Hill, Blue Ridge Chapel, and Pleasant Union. Serving on these committees were: A. W. Ross, J. W. Barker, A. C. Hash, W. A. Hash, and I. N. Young.

There were sermons during the session by C. W. Trainham, J. F. Fletcher and C. T. Taylor. R. W. Young served as moderator and Walter A. Hash as clerk and treasurer.

The association met the following year with Rock Bridge Church, the sessions beginning on August 28, 1905. Rev. W. R. Richardson preached the introductory sermon. R. W. Young was chosen moderator and E. W. Reedy clerk and treasurer. No mention is made of visiting ministers in the minutes of this session. C. T. Taylor and W. R. Richardson, who had been so listed the year before, had become pastors in the association during the year.

Various committees reporting to the association, presented encouraging statistics. There had been added during the year by baptism fifty-four members, making a total of 913, a net gain of forty-eight over the previous year. There had been paid to preachers a total of \$857.42 and to all of the boards \$368.08. Eleven churches reported Sunday schools with an enrollment of

788. A new church had been formed at Galax, Virginia, and a letter from it was received too late for it to be received at this session.

The thirty-sixth session of the association, held with Friendship Church, beginning August 28, 1906, was marked by the reception of two new churches, one of these being Galax, above referred to, and Comer's Rock. J. W. Barker was elected moderator and E. W. Reedy clerk and treasurer. The introductory sermon was preached by Rev. J. M. Pilcher, D.D., from the text Luke 5:37. This session was marked also by strong preaching by Dr. Pilcher, Rev. C. W. Trainham, Rev. A. W. McDaniel and G. M. Pennington. Eighteen churches were represented by delegates.

The thirty-seventh session was held with Pine Branch Church, beginning on August 27, 1907, with the introductory sermon by Rev. C. T. Taylor. The officers of the previous year were re-elected. Eighteen churches were found to be represented.

The minutes of this session show a net gain for the year of fifty-eight and a total membership of 1,140. With the single exception of state missions, the reports showed a substantial gain in contributions for all boards. The colporter, J. W. Barker, presented an interesting report, showing that he had made average monthly sales of Bibles and religious books amounting to \$58.67. He had found 201 homes without a Bible in them and 598 homes destitute of other religious literature.

It is reported that Rev. Albert G. Hash was present as a visitor and preached during the sessions.

The thirty-eighth session of the association began on September 17, 1908, with Snow Hill Church. E. W. Reedy preached the introductory sermon and sixteen churches were found to be represented. The association organized for business by electing J. W. Barker moderator and J. F. Fletcher clerk and treasurer. This session was marked by the presence of many visitors and by much preaching, among the visitors being C. W. Trainham of the Lebanon Association; Dr. K. Thompson and J. Williams of the Surry County Association; R. D. Garland, field secretary of the State Mission Board; E. E. Lamb of the Valley Association; Amos Clary of *The Religious Herald*; J. C. Carper of the Blue Ridge Association. There were sermons during the sessions by E. W. Reedy, R. D. Garland, E. E. Lamb, J. F. Fletcher, J. H. Powers and J. C. Carper.

The association showed much interest in the institutions of the church and eleven delegates, for their churches, pledged boxes of food and clothing for the Baptist Orphanage at Salem, Virginia.

The report of the committee on digest of church letters has this significant remark:

“We note that there has been a considerable decline in contributions for all objects by the churches, but the Women’s Missionary Union comes in and saves the day.”

This splendid organization has a way of coming in and saving the day and has done it many times since in the history of the New River Association.

The association showed a total membership of 1,292 and had baptized during the year 212 persons. Fifteen churches reported Sunday schools with 1,022 members.

The association met in its thirty-ninth session with Liberty Hill Church, beginning on August 31st, 1909. The officers of the previous year were re-elected and sixteen churches were found to be represented. Rev. J. H. Powers preached the annual sermon. One new church, Midway, was received at this session and two churches, Brush Creek and Pleasant Grove, who, with Galena Church had gone off from the New River Association in 1897 to join in the organization of the Alleghany and Grayson Association, asked to be taken back. They were received under the watch-care of the association, to be regularly taken in when properly dismissed from the Alleghany and Grayson Association. Galena Church, which went off with the other two, was not heard of again.

Among the visitors at this session were noted Hon. W. C. Fields, moderator of the Alleghany Association (North Carolina); C. T. Taylor of Bristol, Virginia; C. W. Trainham, Marion, Virginia; Prof. S. W. Edmondson of Virginia Institute, now Intermont College, Bristol, Virginia; A. G. Hash of Bethel Association, Alabama; Walter A. Hash, missionary in Buchanan County, Virginia; W. E. Lankford of the Portsmouth (Virginia) Association.

At this session it was announced that the functions of the Sunday School and Bible Board had been assumed by the State Mission Board and the clerk was instructed to make the proper notation in the records. During this session there was great interest in the “Laymen’s Movement” and a committee was named to direct the work within the bounds of the association.

The digest of church letters showed 122 baptisms during the year and a total membership of 1,377. Thirteen churches reported Sunday schools with 1,028 members. There had been a gain of \$180.79 in contributions to the boards and the association pledged itself to raise \$250 for foreign missions during the coming year.

Comer's Rock Church was reported as extinct and was dropped from the rolls.

The fortieth annual session of the association met with Laurel Church, beginning September 15, 1910, with the annual sermon by Rev. A. S. Murray. Letters from twenty churches and two mission stations were handed in and the association organized by re-electing the officers of the previous year.

Three churches had been reported as missing the previous year and special messengers had been named to investigate their condition and make report. J. F. Fletcher reported that Flat Ridge Church was practically extinct and advised that it be dropped from the rolls. W. J. Banks reported that the church at Independence was in a "hopeful" condition and T. R. Warren reported that Haw Orchard Church was in good shape, had added twenty-three by baptism during the year, and was completing a new house of worship.

A study of the church letters for this session showed a slight falling off in contributions to the boards. The total membership was 1,605 and eight had been received by baptism during the year. Twenty churches reported Sunday schools with 127 officers and teachers and 1,557 pupils. The minutes of this session show that there had been considerable activity during the year in the W. M. U. and in work among the Baptist young people.

The clerk was authorized at this session to have printed in the back of the minutes an "Abstract of Principles."

The next session, which was the forty-first, began with Galax Church on August 29, 1911. J. F. Fletcher preached the annual sermon and twenty-one churches and two mission stations were found to be represented. D. J. McCarroll was elected moderator and J. F. Fletcher clerk and treasurer.

Because of its influence upon the history of the association from that time to the present, I look upon this session of the New River Association as the most important in many years, perhaps the most important in all of its history, for it was at

this session that Oak Hill Academy, mention of which was made frequently in my account of the early history of the association, entered upon a new phase of its development. The school, as a denominational school, had been dead for many years. The old brick building, now used as a boys' dormitory, had been in use throughout the years as a public school building. I had the honor to present the report of the committee on education at this session and I quote these paragraphs from it:

"We recommend, First: That this association establish an academy somewhere within its bounds and request the Home Missions Board to incorporate it into its system of mountain schools;

"Second, that the association appoint a board of nine trustees to receive property and manage said school;

"Third, that we invite the Ashe and Alleghany associations (in North Carolina) to join us in the establishing of this school and that they appoint trustees to represent the work in their respective territories.

"We pledge to this enterprise our money and our children."

It should be borne in mind that Oak Hill Academy was chartered by the 1879-1880 General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia, with a self-perpetuating board of trustees. Rev. W. C. Parks was at that time a member of the General Assembly from Grayson and secured the passage of the bill. The original board of trustees was composed of the following:

W. G. Young, L. N. Perkins, W. C. Parks, R. W. Young, William Halsey, James Eller (of Ashe County, N. C.); William A. Carson, J. J. L. Sherwood and Greenberry Halsey.

This board of trustees had continued in existence through the years and the matter now laid before the association had been taken up with this board with the result that it had taken the following action:

"On motion, it was ordered by the Board of Trustees of Oak Hill Academy that L. N. Hash, J. F. Fletcher and W. A. Hash, be and are hereby appointed a committee to act for us and in our name and stead, and to contract with

the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, or with a committee of trustees appointed to represent said board, in regard to the property of Oak Hill Academy.

“(Signed) W. C. Fields,

“Chairman of Board of Trustees.

“W. M. Senter, Clerk.”

The recommendations of the committee on education met with favor and there was an interesting and enthusiastic discussion of the matter in which many joined. There had been a growing feeling that the time was ripe for a revival of Oak Hill Academy and a small group of devoted men and women had been at work quietly for two or three years, laying the ground work for the action which the New River Association took at this session. The association passed the following resolution, proposed by Samuel N. Hurst:

“Resolved, that the New River Association express its willingness to accept the Oak Hill Academy property, near Mouth of Wilson, Va., for the purpose of a Baptist school and that said association appoint trustees for said property. The association also requests the Home Mission Board to incorporate said school into its system of mountain schools.”

Having adopted this resolution, the association proceeded to name the following trustees for the school:

W. C. Fields, J. D. Perkins, L. N. Hash, Walter A. Hash, W. M. Senter, J. F. Fletcher, W. J. Phipps, Dr. J. C. McKee and W. I. Harp.

Viewing with favor the recommendation of the committee on education that the New River Association invite its sister associations, the Ashe and the Alleghany Associations in North Carolina, to join in the venture, the association adopted a motion made by Dr. A. E. Brown, that J. F. Fletcher and W. A. Hash be named to visit the two associations and invite them to participate in the building of a great Baptist school at Oak Hill. Dr. Brown, who was field secretary of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, was a visitor at this meeting of the association and his advice and counsel were of incalculable value to the friends of the undertaking. Dr. Brown loves the people of the mountains, believes in them and works for them incessantly and he found peculiar delight in helping with this undertaking.

It is best to relate here that the two men named lost no time in laying the matter before the two associations named and both associations approved it. The Ashe Association named as its trustee Prof. J. C. Goodman, and the Alleghany Association named Dr. B. E. Reeves.

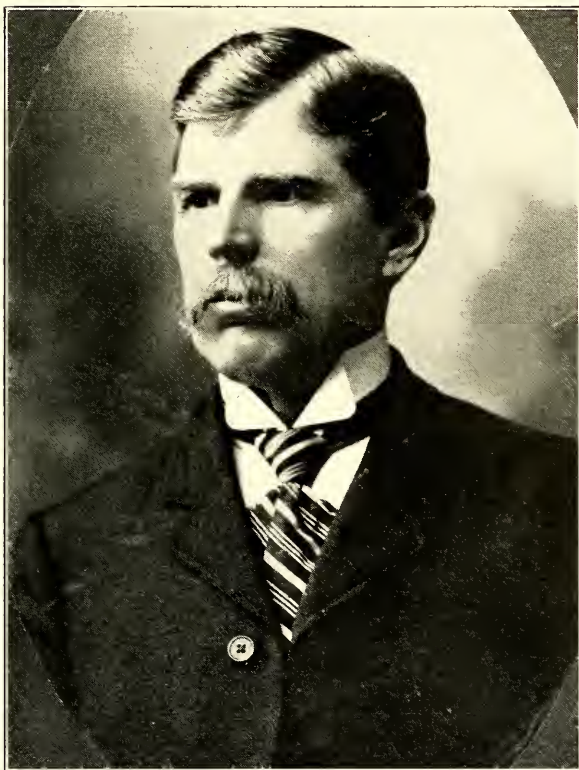
The forty-second annual session met with Young's Chapel Church on August 27, 1912. This church is situated at Oak Hill, and is the church of the school. Naturally, everybody present was deeply interested in all things pertaining to Oak Hill Academy. It is not recorded in the minutes that there was a great deal of preaching at this session, but there was tremendous interest in all meetings of the association and vast enthusiasm for the Home Mission Board and its educational work.

I think that the outstanding feature of this meeting was the presence there of Hon. J. F. Spainhour of Morganton, N. C., whom I have already referred to as one of the early teachers at Oak Hill Academy. More than 30 years prior to the 1912 meeting of the New River Association, Professor Spainhour had come to Oak Hill to have charge of the work and he had labored effectively and well. Before leaving for other fields he had married one of Grayson County's finest young women, a daughter of Rev. W. C. Parks, and his heart had always been with Oak Hill and the people of Grayson. The news of the resurrection of Oak Hill Academy brought him back to the scenes of his young manhood and no one who was present will ever forget the earnest, eloquent and impassioned address that he delivered on that occasion.

He was speaking in favor of the following resolution, presented by a special committee, composed of himself, J. D. Perkins and J. C. C. Dunford:

"Resolved, That this association most heartily approve of the work of the Home Mission Board in its efforts to establish at Oak Hill a school worthy of the support of all of the people within our bounds and we especially commend it to all of our Baptist people;

"Resolved, further, that we urge the people of every church in our association to give the school its heartiest support in patronage and means and urge our pastors to cooperate in all ways possible with the financial agent of the Board of Trustees in their immediate effort to secure means and patronage for its assured success."



HON. J. F. SPAINHOUR

His eloquence moved his hearers to larger effort and when the assembled delegates had finished making pledges for the work it was found that the amount subscribed for Oak Hill Academy had been increased to \$3,600. The resolutions were passed by unanimous and enthusiastic vote and from the impetus received at that meeting, Oak Hill has moved steadily forward. Many things have happened to the school since that time. There have been ups and downs, many disappointments and discouragements, but progress all the time, despite difficulties. I regret that there is not space here to tell more of its growth, and of the men and women who have labored in and for the school since 1912.

At this session, Corinth Church, which had gone away to join the Ashe Association in 1900, came back and was re-admitted to the New River. There had been 105 baptisms in the association during the preceding year and the total membership was 1,202. The reports of the churches showed a falling off in pastors' salaries but an increase in gifts to the boards of more than \$1,000. Twenty-three churches reported Sunday schools with 1,327 students.

I find included in the minutes a list of the ordained ministers of the association at this time, these being:

J. R. Brown, J. L. Bishop, W. F. Brannock, N. M. Blevins, J. W. Farmer, J. F. Fletcher, A. J. Hart, R. E. Ingram, R. K. Johnson, A. S. Murray, J. S. Murray, J. M. Neaves, G. M. Pennington, E. W. Reedy, M. Sturgill, A. J. Stamper, J. A. Schuyler, J. M. Walls and T. R. Warren. Of these nineteen ordained preachers, only four were serving as pastors of churches in the association. There were three non-resident pastors and nine licentiates, as follows:

W. C. B. Green, R. M. Perry, W. O. Russell, E. H. Watson, W. H. Johnson, E. W. Ross, J. S. LaRue, S. S. Holcomb and Calvin Blevins.

At the end of the minutes of this session I find that I inserted this rather personal note:

“Having been called to a field in Davidson County (Denton and Stoner's Grove Churches), I take this method of saying goodbye and God bless you to all of my friends in the mountains, among whom I have lived all of my life and among whom I have labored as a preacher for 37 years.”

In this story I have been taking no note of my own comings and goings, further than to record my activities in the association as shown in the minutes, and as it is not possible, nor is it desirable, to get away from the personal factor in a story like this, I wish to set it down here that the New River Association has always been close to my heart and has been hard to stay away from. I began my ministry in it and served in it up to 1886, when the Ashe and Alleghany Association was formed and the North Carolina churches withdrew from the New River. Then in 1890 I was called to a field composed of Young's Chapel, Baptist Union, and Liberty Hill churches in the New River Association, and I labored there, living at Oak Hill, serving these and other churches until 1900, when I moved back to the Ashe Association.

The year 1908 found me back in the New River Association, serving the same field of churches, and living at the Liberty Hill Church, after having served fields in Ashe and Alleghany counties in North Carolina. If I were called upon to state the strongest reason for my return to the association at this time, I would be compelled to say that it was my interest in Oak Hill Academy. I had always cherished the dream that some day a great Baptist school would be set up at Oak Hill and I hoped and prayed that I might have a humble part in it. With some of my dreams already come true and the future bright, I was free to accept a call elsewhere and in 1912 I moved to Davidson County, North Carolina, which was in the territory of the old Yadkin Association, mother association of the New River, the Ashe and the Alleghany, and many other associations, with whose beginnings we opened this story. Here I served for four years, but the year 1917 found me back in the New River Association, where I served until 1919 and then returned to North Carolina. During the next five years I served, for the larger part of the time, as pastor of Southside Baptist Church in High Point, N. C., a church that had grown out of a mission station that I had established while serving in the adjoining county of Davidson.

I came back to the New River Association in 1924 to become pastor of Young's Chapel Church and as this is written I am again in close touch with the friends of my young manhood and with the great school that I love.

So while I thought in 1912 that I was saying goodbye forever to the New River Association, with its tender ties and blessed

memories, it was not to be so. I was to return not once but twice and I can ask nothing better of Him whose direction I try to follow, than that I be allowed to finish my work here among my people.

This personal digression having been attended to, let us resume our story of the New River Association, with the forty-third annual session, which was held at Independence Church, beginning September 11, 1913. This session was marked by deep interest in the work at Oak Hill. Rev. J. C. Cox, who had taken charge of the school the preceding year, preached a powerful sermon on education, using as his text Judges 7:21. Following his sermon a substantial contribution was made for the work of the school. There was also deep interest in the subject of Sunday schools. L. C. Ross presented a splendid report on the subject and made a strong plea for increased interest in the work, stressing the need of trained teachers and the necessity of remodeling old churches and building new so to take care of Sunday school needs.

On September 14, 1914, the association met in its forty-fourth annual session with Troutdale Church. Rev. Walter A. Hash and L. C. Ross, who had served as moderator and clerk, respectively, in the 1913 session, were re-elected and Rev. F. L. Cox preached the introductory sermon. This session was marked by no outstanding event but all of the reports showed that good work had been done during the year. The total membership was 1,625 and 148 had been received by baptism. Twenty-two churches in the association reported Sunday schools with 154 teachers and 1,555 pupils. All of the churches reporting had paid pastors' salaries amounting to \$1,466.56 and contributions to the boards showed an increase of \$93.26 over the previous year.

The forty-fifth annual session was held with Corinth Church, beginning on September 2, 1915, with the introductory sermon by Rev. J. C. Cox. The officers of the preceding year were re-elected. Twenty-one churches were represented by delegates and there was one lady delegate, Miss Ethel Anderson of Fries, Va., the first in the history of the association. One new church, Glenwood, was received at this session and the statistical reports showed a total membership of 1,673. There had been 127 baptisms during the year and a substantial gain in contributions to all causes was noted.

This session was marked by special interest in the cause of prohibition. Dr. G. W. Perryman, field worker of the Virginia Anti-Saloon League, had attended the 1914 session and had spoken on the subject. The association, after discussion, adopted the following resolution:

“Resolved, That we as an association request that the nominees of both parties for representatives from Grayson County in the General Assembly, announce in the county press their position in reference to state-wide prohibition.”

The association met in its forty-sixth annual session with Baptist Union Church, beginning on August 24, 1916. The introductory sermon was preached by Rev. C. E. Anderson. Twenty-two churches were represented. The officers of the previous year were re-elected.

This session showed continued interest in matter of prohibition and the following resolution was adopted:

“Resolved, That we, the members of the New River Association, pledge our hearty co-operation to the officials of our county and state to help enforce the law to put down traffic and use of all intoxicating drinks and to eradicate the same from our commonwealth.”

There was much interest in the subject of education and Oak Hill Academy came in for a large part of the discussions. The report of the committee on education commended Oak Hill to the association, stating that Oak Hill was no longer an experiment but a real institution that had come to stay and to grow, and urged all Baptists everywhere to give it their earnest support. At this time the physical property of the school was valued at \$25,000. The report stated that “the success and growth of the Baptist cause in this section of the country will depend in a large measure upon Oak Hill Academy,” showing that the association was really aroused about the school and interested in its growth.

The forty-seventh annual session of the association began with Fries Baptist Church on August 23, 1917. Twenty-one of the twenty-six associations were represented. Rev. T. R. Warren preached the annual sermon and the association organized by electing J. F. Fletcher, moderator; L. D. Vaughan, vice-moderator, and L. C. Ross, clerk and treasurer.

There was much interest at this session in giving and many of the delegates present pledged themselves to tithe and to try to induce their brethren to tithe. Oak Hill again came in for much discussion and individuals attending the association pledged more than \$100 to it. A slight increase in contributions to the boards was noted and the twenty-one churches reporting had had seventy-seven baptisms. There were twenty-two ordained ministers in the association, of whom only nine were serving pastorates in the association, and a total of \$1,451.26 had been paid pastors.

The association adjourned to meet with Young's Chapel Church on Thursday before the fourth Sunday in August, 1918. This, the forty-eighth annual session, was held but no minutes were printed, essential matters being carried over and included in the minutes of the next year. J. F. Fletcher was elected moderator and L. C. Ross clerk and treasurer. It was reported at this session that Blue Ridge Church was dormant and that Snow Hill, which had not sent delegates to the association for two or three years, had rallied and was represented. There were 113 baptisms reported and the total membership was 1,648. Pastors' salaries for the year reached \$1,790.37 and the value of all church property was reported as \$22,465.00. Sixteen churches reported Sunday schools with 1,222 pupils and 110 officers and teachers.

The forty-ninth session met with Troutdale Church on August 29, 1919. Rev. F. L. Cox preached the introductory sermon and twenty-one churches were represented by delegates. W. A. Hash was elected moderator and L. C. Ross clerk and treasurer. A notable visitor at this session was Dr. A. E. Brown of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. The association pledged \$200 to Oak Hill Academy and the Southern Baptist \$75,000,000 campaign was officially launched, with V. L. Young, T. E. Brannock and F. A. McCarroll named as the apportionment committee for the New River Association. Many churches were reported as pastorless at this session and contributions had fallen off in every department of the denomination's work.

The fiftieth annual session was held with Pleasant Grove Church, beginning on September 2, 1920. Rev. C. A. Chocklett preached the introductory sermon and letters were handed in from twenty churches. W. A. Hash was re-elected moderator and C. E. Kanode was elected clerk and treasurer. It was an-

nounced that the New River Association had been asked to raise \$13,000.00 for the \$75,000,000 campaign and that fine progress had already been made toward raising the allotment. Various churches in the association had already paid in \$2,400.

The executive committee reported that an effort had been made during the year to group the churches of the association so as to provide fields that would support pastors and provide a pastor for every church. Real progress along this line had been made.

The next session of the association, the fifty-first, was held with Fellowship Church, beginning September 2, 1921. Rev. C. A. Chocklett again preached the annual sermon. Twenty churches were represented, and the organization was completed with the election of W. F. Brannock as moderator and L. C. Ross clerk and treasurer. One new church, Lamsburg, organized March 13, 1921, was received and Blue Ridge Chapel, after having failed for several years to send delegates, came back.

It was reported that there had been considerable interest in the association during the year in the Sunday school work. At twelve of the churches Sunday school institutes had been held by Kenneth E. Burke, with large attendance. Eighteen churches reported thriving Sunday schools.

There had been 144 baptisms during the year and the total membership was 1,862. The churches had contributed to all causes \$10,949.65.

The association met with Friendship Church in its fifty-second annual session on Thursday before the first Sunday in September, 1922. Rev. J. R. Shumake preached the annual sermon. Twenty-two churches were represented. The officers for this session were Walter A. Hash, moderator, and L. P. Stamper, clerk and treasurer.

Reports submitted showed that there had been continued interest in Sunday school work, eleven churches reporting Sunday school institutes which had attracted large attendance. Four churches reported the organization of Baptist Young People's Unions.

It was reported at this session that Oak Hill Academy had been taken over by the State Mission Board of Virginia, and there was great rejoicing over it, because it marked the beginning of a new era of usefulness for the school.

Twenty-one churches report that their church property aggregates \$29,924.00 in value. During the year they had paid \$1,926.23 in pastors' salaries and \$1,189.78 for the \$75,000,000 campaign. The total given for all causes during the year was \$7,631.54. There had been 223 baptisms and the total membership was 1,968. Twenty churches reported Sunday schools with 1,662 teachers and pupils.

The fifty-third annual session of the association met with Snow Hill Church on August 30, 1923, and the introductory sermon was preached by Rev. Walter A. Hash. Reports were received from twenty-two churches and the association organized for business by electing Walter A. Hash moderator and W. H. Johnson clerk and treasurer.

A call was made for a report on the spiritual condition of the churches, with a most gratifying response. The association went on record in favor of memorializing the Virginia General Assembly in favor of a bill creating a board of censors for moving pictures, opposing prize fighting and favoring a stricter observance of the Sunday laws.

The association met for its fifty-fourth annual session with Young's Chapel Church on August 22, 1924. Rev. J. H. Hall preached the annual sermon and the officers of the previous year were re-elected. Twenty-one churches were found to be represented.

An interesting visitor at this session was Rev. A. R. Gallimore, a native of Davidson County, North Carolina, and graduate of Wake Forest College, who had been the first principal of Oak Hill Academy under the control of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and was, at this time, a missionary in China. He made a fine talk about mission work in general and about the outlook in China.

The association took an advanced position with regard to the Baptist \$75,000,000 campaign and after R. D. Garland, secretary of the State Mission Board, had spoken on the subject, went on record as favoring the raising of \$2,500 for the cause within the association and appointed Rev. A. C. McGee to organize the necessary campaign for raising this amount.

It is interesting to note here that the Baptists of the New River Association were learning to give along all lines and to pay their pastors adequate salaries. At the 1923 session, the statistical tables showed that twenty-two churches reported pas-

tors' salaries aggregating \$2,669.80. At this session, sixteen churches reported on this matter and the sixteen paid pastors \$4,745.00. This is in marked contrast with the year 1874 when sixteen churches reported paying their pastors a total of \$182.21. There had been 119 baptisms during the year and the total membership of the association was 1,840.

The fifty-fifth session of the association met with Galax Church on August 25, 1925, and Rev. J. R. Shumate preached the introductory sermon. Twenty-one of the twenty-seven churches in the association were represented. The officers of the previous year were re-elected.

Reports of various phases of the work submitted at this session were of very high order and were ably discussed. It was reported that the churches had contributed toward all home causes a total of \$7,269.35 and to the 1925 program and other benevolences, \$1,937.90. There had been a net gain in membership of fifty-nine.

Five new pastors were reported, these being A. A. Blevins of Chilhowie, Va.; J. F. Fletcher of Kindrick, Va.; W. A. Hawley of Fries, Va.; Kissell Sturgill of Lodi, Va.

The fifty-sixth annual session was held with Fellowship Church, near Comer's Rock, beginning on August 20, 1926, with the introductory sermon by Rev. W. A. Hawley. Twenty-five of the twenty-seven churches were represented and the association organized by re-electing the officers of the preceding year.

At the suggestion of Rev. Walter A. Hash, the association voted to undertake the raising of \$2,500 for the association's co-operative program during the coming year, the funds raised to be apportioned among the churches by the executive committee.

The digest of church letters showed a net gain in membership amounting to 120. Eighteen churches reported Sunday schools with 1,722 members. All of the churches had paid their pastors a total of \$5,498.52 and for all home purposes, \$7,793.21. The total paid to missions was \$2,954.58. There had been a net gain for all purposes of \$1,340.67. The association reported having twenty-seven ordained ministers, only thirteen of whom were pastors, and four licentiates.

This completes my story of the New River Association. We have followed it from its beginning in the convention of June 10, 1870, held at Baptist Chapel Church in Ashe County, North

Carolina. We have watched it grow from a small association with thirteen churches and 611 members, scattered over Ashe and Alleghany counties in North Carolina and Grayson County, Virginia, into a powerful association of twenty-seven churches, all in Grayson County, Virginia, with more than 2,000 members in 1926. During this period of fifty-six years, the association has given off enough churches to form the Ashe Association with thirty-eight churches and 2,651 members and the Alleghany Association with ten churches and 542 members. As I have already related, the Ashe and Alleghany Association was formed mainly from the New River, though certain churches were taken into the Ashe and Alleghany from the Brushy Mountain and other associations, and the New River is in reality the "mother association." The Ashe and Alleghany Association, as has been related, later divided into the Ashe Association and the Alleghany Association and in the chapter that follows I will tell of the growth of the Ashe Association.

In taking leave of the New River Association I desire to express my sincere regrets that I have not been able to tell its story as it should have been told. There are many things that have been omitted because of the limitations of space. Not everything could be included in the modest volume that I am limited to and many things had to be left out.

I wish that I could tell you in detail the inspiring story of the beginnings and the growth and achievements of the Woman's Missionary Movement in the New River Association from that day back in 1893 when the association was meeting with Liberty Hill Church and the first associational organization was attempted, with Mrs. S. M. Greer as superintendent; Miss Sarah J. LaRue, secretary, and Mrs. J. B. Eanes, treasurer. The first Woman's Missionary Society in the association was organized in the fall of 1893 at Young's Chapel Church, with Mrs. I. N. Young as president. Mrs. Young later succeeded Mrs. Greer as associational superintendent. In 1906 Miss Sarah J. LaRue, a daughter of J. H. LaRue, a splendid Baptist layman who served the New River Association effectively and well for many years, became superintendent and she has continued in office since that time, her influence widening and increasing with the years.

I wish that I had space to relate here the achievements of our W. M. U. under the leadership of Miss LaRue. It is typical of the organization that it raised its full quota for the Baptist

\$75,000,000 campaign and \$600 more. There is no more vital force in the bounds of the New River Association than the W. M. U. and I regret that I am not capable of paying Miss LaRue and the noble band of women that she leads and has led for so long, the tribute that is their due.

I have tried to tell in detail the story of Oak Hill Baptist Academy from its early beginnings and struggles up to the present. The reader will find herein the names of the men who established the school and who labored for it through the years. Many of them have long since gone to their reward and the school lives on, growing from year to year, a monument to their faithfulness and their love for humanity.

The school today is under the management of Rev. Walter A. Hash, who has been principal since 1923. During the spring term of 1927 the girls' dormitory, a large frame structure, was burned to the ground, entailing a heavy loss and great inconvenience to faculty and students. Undaunted by the misfortune, the school finished the term and a new and better building was started on the site of the old. It is now nearing completion. There is a bright future ahead of the institution and no one can measure the good that it has done or the good that it will do. The school has always been fortunate in the character of the leaders that have served it but at no time in its history has it had a head who surpassed Walter A. Hash. In many respects, I think that he is the best of them all. He is going forward steadily, serenely, confidently, developing Christian leaders at Oak Hill Baptist Academy who will inspire and uplift hundreds and hundreds of communities in our beloved mountains.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ASHE AND ALLEGHANY ASSOCIATION.

As has been related, the Baptist churches of Ashe County, with the exception of Buffalo, Bethel and Mt. Pleasant, went into the organization of the New River Association in 1870, thus allying themselves with the Baptists of Virginia. This union continued until 1886 and while fine progress had been made along many lines, the arrangement had not been altogether satisfactory. The Baptist leaders of North Carolina felt that the Baptists of Ashe should be allied with their own state organization. The same feeling had been growing among the Baptists of Ashe and Alleghany counties and when the late John E. Ray, secretary of the Baptist State Mission Board of Raleigh, N. C., made a journey up into Ashe and Alleghany, he found that his Baptist brethren of these two mountain counties were anxious to form connection with the Baptist work in their own State. His conferences with Baptist leaders in this territory resulted in the calling of a convention to consider the formation of the Ashe and Alleghany Association and this convention was held at Buffalo Church in Ashe County, on September 24 and 25, 1886.

This convention was opened with a sermon by Elder G. W. Greene, and prayer by Rev. I. W. Thomas. Elder T. M. Honeycutt was elected president and H. A. Eller secretary. Eight churches were represented by delegates. The minutes of the session, to my great regret, do not carry the names of these delegates. Some of the important committees named were as follows:

Committee on Constitution and Rules of Decorum, James Eller, W. M. Hall and G. W. Greene, with the president and secretary as members ex-officio; On Articles of Faith, T. M. Duncan, I. W. Thomas, C. J. Woodson, J. F. Fletcher, and E. L. Tucker.

The constitution adopted was in the usual form, except the last clause in the 12th article, which reads as follows:

“This association will not receive nor retain in its permanent fellowship any church that retains in its fellowship any member who is corrupt in doctrine or practice, or who makes, sells, or deals in ardent spirits as a beverage.”

This clause was presented as an amendment and was unanimously adopted.

Pledges were taken for associational missionary work amounting to \$80.00 and the following resolution was adopted relative to the change in relations that was taking place:

“We desire to express our heart-felt gratitude to the brethren of the Western Baptist Convention for the efficient aid received from their missionaries in our territory for some years past and while it seems best for us to co-operate with the State Convention, we shall ever remember with gratitude the help received from these brethren.”

The secretary, in closing the minutes of this meeting, added the following prayer:

“May God grant that it may bring to the Baptist denomination of this country a brighter day. May it bring salvation to many souls and glory and honor to His name.”

At this time there were only 478 Baptists in the whole field and only four ordained ministers, these being T. M. Honeycutt, T. M. Duncan, J. F. Fletcher and William Hall. Honeycutt was a missionary at Sparta. He came to this territory from Mars Hill, N. C., as a representative of the Western Baptist Convention. Hall came from Virginia and only lived a short while after this. Duncan was a native of Ashe. Today this association has been expanded into two associations, the Ashe and the Alleghany, and the Ashe Association alone has thirty-seven churches and nineteen ordained preachers. Surely, the prayer of Clerk Eller has been gloriously answered!

I think I should set down here a few things about the men who took part in this epochal convention, for I knew them all intimately and well and loved them all.

Elder G. W. Greene was at that time principal of Moravian Falls Academy, a splendid school in Wilkes County. Later he was a missionary in China. C. J. Woodson was a wise Baptist leader, a brother-in-law of Governor T. J. Jarvis. I think that he is still living at Shelby, N. C. W. M. Hall was a good man, conscientious, devoted to the cause and always ready to serve wherever there was need. T. M. Duncan was a man beloved of the people, faithful always in the discharge of his duties. He was a successful pastor and evangelist. H. A. Eller was not a preacher but from his youth he was a devoted Christian. He was a son of James Eller and I can say nothing better of him than that he was worthy of his father. James Eller, who had

figured largely in the history of the Baptists of Ashe County, came to Ashe from Wilkes County in 1865. It is worthy of note that the Ellers came from the Jersey section in what is now Davidson County, North Carolina, where a colony composed largely of Baptists from Plainfield, New Jersey, settled in 1755. James Eller was a great-grandson of Elder George McNeill, first moderator of the Yadkin Association in 1790. He died March 19, 1926, only a few months after the death of his wife, who was a truly remarkable woman, a real mother in Israel. They had lived together nearly 75 years at the time of her passing.

The Ashe and Alleghany Association held its first annual session with New Hope Church in Alleghany County, beginning on September 22, 1877. Elder S. M. Collis preached the introductory sermon and nine churches were found to be represented. Elder T. M. Honeycutt was elected moderator and H. A. Eller clerk and treasurer. Visitors were welcomed into the body as follows:

Elder S. M. Collis, from the Mitchell County Association; Elders I. W. Thomas, E. F. Jones and Asa Brown, from the Three Forks Association; Elders D. J. Roberts and W. E. Byrd, from the Elkin Association; Elder I. T. Privette of the Brushy Mountain Association; Elder W. C. Parks, C. J. Woodson and G. M. Burcham of the New River Association, and Elder Solomon Blackburn, of no association.

The predicament in which the last-named found himself should be explained, in order that no injustice may be done a good man. He was a member of the Mt. Pleasant Church, which had withdrawn from the New River Association the previous year in order to unite with the Ashe and Alleghany, but which had been debarred from the Ashe and Alleghany by Article 12 of the constitution that I have already referred to.

Large plans were laid for the work and eight churches, including a prospective church to be organized at Jefferson, pledged \$110.00 toward the support of two associational missionaries, D. W. Thomason to be stationed at Jefferson and T. M. Honeycutt at Sparta. The churches reported a total gain of twenty-four and a membership of 500. There had been paid for pastors' salaries \$157.00, the largest salary being \$60 and the lowest \$12. All of the churches had contributed \$39.55 for all causes, \$35.25 of the amount being for State missions. Five churches reported Sunday schools with 287 pupils and teachers.

The second annual session of the association met with Apple Grove Church in Ashe County on September 6, 1888. Elder T. M. Honeycutt preached the introductory sermon and when letters were called for from new churches, delegates from Jefferson and Rye Cove churches presented themselves. Pleasant Home Church, from the New River Association, presented a letter and asked for admission. All three were received. Bristol Church later in the session presented a letter and was received, and Healing Springs also came in at this session, both being new churches.

This session evinced much interest in State missions, ten churches and individuals present pledging \$150.50 for the cause. The church letters showed that six churches had paid pastors' salaries aggregating \$178.75. For association missions \$124.27 had been raised and \$500 had been raised for church building. There were fourteen churches in the association and seven ordained ministers, as follows:

T. M. Honeycutt, T. M. Duncan, D. W. Thomason, J. F. Fletcher, S. Blackburn, Elihu Tucker and B. C. Swift.

The association convened in its third annual session with Landmark Church on Silas Creek, in Ashe County, on September 12, 1889. Elder T. M. Duncan preached the introductory sermon, fourteen churches were represented and organization was completed by electing W. C. Fields moderator and H. A. Eller clerk and treasurer.

Reports from all of the churches were hopeful and full of enthusiasm. Elder W. W. White of Wilkes County, had been secured during the year as colporter and had done fine work. Much to everybody's regret it was announced that Elder T. M. Honeycutt was leaving the association for other fields.

The association held its fourth annual session with Jefferson Church, beginning on September 18, 1890, with the opening sermon by Elder J. F. Fletcher. Four new churches came in at this session, these being Baptist Home, Brushy Fork, Long Branch and New Cranberry. Eighteen churches in all presented letters and the association got under way by re-electing the officers of the previous year.

There was much of interest in this session but I think that probably the most interesting feature was the report of the executive committee, this committee being composed at this time of James Eller, W. C. Fields and G. H. Phillips. I quote some extracts from this report:

"In Alleghany County, Elder D. J. Harris is preaching at three points and doing good work. In Ashe County, of Elder D. W. Thomason the same may be said. The house at Healing Springs has been completed and there are good Sunday schools at Jefferson and at the Springs.

"Elder W. W. White is on the North River mission and has operated in new and unoccupied territory. He has torn down the strongholds of intemperance and established a church thereupon. He has organized three churches, one at Long Branch with twelve members, one at Roundabout (Baptist Home) with twenty members, and one at Brushy Fork with twenty members. Elder J. F. Fletcher has organized one church."

Many Ashe County Baptists will remember Elder White, militant preacher and a missionary worker whose zeal knew no bounds. He was a man of the highest moral and physical courage, always at his best in the face of difficulties. I wish to tell here a part of the story referred to above that is not told in this report. I got it from Elder White himself.

He said that when he went into the community referred to in the report he could find no place to preach except in a whiskey warehouse. Within sight of this warehouse there could be seen the smoke from three blockade distilleries. He began his meeting here, in an atmosphere of alcohol, surrounded by friends of the liquor business, some of whom were following it legitimately under government license and others blockading it. Before the meeting was over the distillers were converted and the liquor business had been killed in this community. One man, who had attended the meeting and had not professed conversion, returned to his still house two miles away. While here, whether awake or asleep, this man said he heard Elder White praying for him and he immediately quit the business. A church was built near the place. I have preached in the church and I have seen the whiskey warehouse where the meeting was held.

This community not only went dry but it remained dry. I was told that some time after this reversal of form, a liquor manufacturer from another part of the county, hearing that there was a great shortage of ardent spirits in that community, a real drought, in fact, loaded up several barrels and drove into the community. He was met by a good woman who informed him that if he unloaded any part of it there, the heads of the

barrels would be smashed in. She advised him to depart immediately and he departed.

The fifth annual meeting of the association was held with Sparta Church, in Alleghany County, beginning September 17, 1891. Elder F. B. Cheek preached the introductory sermon. Twenty-one churches presented letters and the association organized by re-electing the officers of the previous year. Two new churches from Ashe County, Beaver Creek and Clifton, and one from Alleghany, Laurel Springs, were received. There had been 102 baptisms during the year and the total membership was 953. Eleven churches reported Sunday schools with 469 members. Contributions to all causes, except to pastors' salaries, had increased materially.

The sixth annual session of the association convened with Bethel Church, in Ashe County, on September 15, 1892. Elder D. J. Harris preached the introductory sermon and twenty-five churches were represented by delegates. Four of these were new, these being Mission Home, New River, Peak Valley, and Obids, all in Ashe County. Elder D. W. Thomason and I organized New River Church in 1889, with four members, and it was revived and strengthened by the labors of Elder T. M. Duncan. The remnant of old Grassy Creek Church, which is mentioned in the story of the Mountain Association, was absorbed by this church. Mission Home was formerly Mt. Pleasant Church, of the Three Forks Association, which had been re-organized and re-named.

An interesting feature of this meeting was the reading of a letter to the association from Elder G. W. Greene, who had been prominent in organizing the association. Elder Greene had gone to China as a missionary and his letter made a deep impression. The executive committee reported that two splendid pastors, D. W. Thomason and W. W. White had left for other fields. Elder J. C. Johnson had been engaged to work in the combined fields of both.

Elder T. M. Duncan was credited with organizing a new church at Obids in Ashe County and with bringing the membership of New River Church up to twenty-four from four, and into the association. The committee also paid tribute to Elders J. F. Stanly, E. Blevins and D. J. Harris for their good work in the association during the year. There had been eighty-seven baptisms during the year and the total membership was 1,016.

The seventh annual meeting of the association was held with Apple Grove Church, beginning September 14, 1893. Elder W. H. Glenn preached the opening sermon. On account of high waters a great many delegates had not been able to reach the meeting and organization was deferred until the following day, Elder T. M. Duncan acting as moderator pro tem. He was elected moderator the next day and H. A. Eller was re-elected clerk and treasurer. Twenty of the twenty-seven churches in the association were represented, among them being a new church, Tree Top, which was duly received.

The association met with Healing Springs Church in Ashe County in its eighth annual session on September 13, 1894. Elder Elihu Tucker preached the annual sermon and twenty-six of the twenty-seven churches in the association were found to be present. W. C. Fields was again elected moderator and H. A. Eller clerk and treasurer. One new church, Pleasant Hill, was received at this session.

There is an item worthy of note in the report of the Committee on Religious Activities in the account of the first day's proceedings, in that it throws light upon a good old custom that is now a thing of the past. The committee reported that "there will be preaching tomorrow at 11:00 A. M. by Elders D. J. Harris and D. P. Bridges; at 2:00 P. M., by Elders C. Blevins and J. F. Fletcher." The custom was to have preaching "at the stand" while the business sessions of the association were going on in the house. Great throngs attended the association, so that there were always enough people to furnish two or more congregations.

Fifteen churches reported seventy-nine baptisms and the total membership of the association was 1,069. Nine churches reported Sunday schools with 393 teachers and pupils.

The ninth annual session was held with Liberty Church in Alleghany County, beginning on October 3, 1895. Elder T. M. Duncan preached the introductory sermon. Twenty-six churches were represented and Liberty Church, in Ashe County, applied for admission and was received. J. H. Doughton was elected moderator and R. L. Shoaf clerk and treasurer. Before the session closed, another new church, Zion Hill, in Ashe County, was admitted. A feature of the meeting was a fine address by O. L. Stringfield, of the Raleigh Association, on the work of the "Baptist Female University," now Meredith College.

The association met in its tenth annual session with Brushy Fork Church in Ashe County on Thursday before the first Sunday in October, 1896. Elder E. Blevins preached the opening sermon and twenty-six of the thirty-one churches in the association were found to be represented. J. H. Doughton was elected moderator and H. A. Eller clerk and treasurer. Two new churches, Meadow View and Calloway's Chapel, were admitted.

Pleasant Hill Church sent up the query, "Can we as Baptists receive members from Pedo-Baptists on their baptism?" and was answered in the negative. A total of 144 baptisms were reported during the year and the total membership was 1,342.

The eleventh annual session of the association met with Forest Home Church on September 28, 1897. Elder E. F. Tatum, a returned missionary from China, preached the annual sermon. Thirty of the thirty-three churches in the association were represented, the three absent ones being Obids, Meadow View and Tree Top. J. H. Doughton was elected moderator and H. A. Eller clerk and treasurer.

The executive committee, which was composed of James Eller, G. L. Porter, L. J. Sturgill, J. J. Garvey and E. E. Phillips, reported that Elder T. M. Duncan had been employed during the year as associational missionary, with the following remarkable results:

Elder Duncan had travelled 1,500 miles, preached 190 sermons, and had witnessed eighty conversions. He had made 105 religious visits, organized ten Sunday schools, and had preached at six regular appointments every month. Two new church buildings had been completed and two others were in course of construction. Elder Duncan had visited all of the churches in the association but three and had received from the field for his support \$53.32.

The question of dividing the association was brought up. It had been discussed in many quarters for several years, the principal reason being that the area covered by the association was too large for the proper handling of it. After a great deal of discussion, during which the division was warmly opposed by several delegates, it was decided to divide the association into two associations, the county line between Ashe and Alleghany to be the dividing line between the two associations.

Reports from the churches showed that there had been eighty baptisms during the year and the total membership of the association was 1,412.

With the close of this session the Ashe and Alleghany Association passed into history and hereafter I will follow only the history of the Ashe Association. I was privileged later to serve in the Alleghany Association, though at the time of division I was in the New River Association, and I wish that I could follow the history of the Alleghany Association down to the present day, but time and space forbid.

The churches that went away to form the Alleghany and Grayson Association were the following:

New Hope, Sparta, Chestnut Grove, Liberty and Calloway's Chapel, the latter being in Grayson County, Va.

Three churches from the New River Association, situated in Grayson County, near the North Carolina-Virginia line, joined with the Alleghany churches in forming the new association, these being Pleasant Grove, Galena and Brush Creek. As stated, the new association was known as the Alleghany and Grayson, but in a few years the churches in Virginia went back to the New River Association and the association is known now as the Alleghany.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ASHE ASSOCIATION.

With these churches gone there were still twenty-eight churches remaining to make up the Ashe Association. While the loss of five active churches was a considerable one, their going away created no disorganization of the association and we will proceed with our story as if there had been no material change.

We find the association meeting in its twelfth annual session with Friendship Church, in Ashe County, on September 27, 1898. Elder Elihu Tucker preached the introductory sermon and twenty-six of the twenty-eight churches were represented. Two new churches, Grayson's Chapel and Bethlehem, were admitted.

James Eller was elected moderator and G. L. Porter was elected clerk and treasurer. There was a great deal of interest at this session in associational missions and all of the pastors and other ordained ministers present agreed to give not less than ten days during the coming year to missionary effort. The report of the executive committee showed that two missionaries had been employed in the association during the year, T. M. Duncan and E. Blevins. They had preached 283 sermons, had organized two churches, completed two houses of worship, and started four others, witnessed fifty-two conversions, baptized eleven and organized eleven Sunday schools. For this service the two of them were paid \$72.61.

I mention the matter of pay so that the present generation and those to come may realize something of the privations that these early-day preachers experienced and the hardships that were theirs. We are immensely proud of the great Baptist structure that exists in this territory today but it was built upon the hard struggles, the self-sacrifice and the unselfish devotion of such men as T. M. Duncan, E. Blevins, T. M. Honeycutt, Elihu Tucker, Franklin Barker and others.

The reports to this session of the association show increases to most of the objects of the State Baptist Convention, but in the matter of pay for preachers there was no increase. The highest salary paid by any church was \$28.00 and the lowest sixty-five cents.

On Tuesday, September 5, 1899, the association met in its thirteenth annual session with New River Church and Elder E. Blevins preached the introductory sermon. Of the twenty-nine

churches, twenty-six were represented and one new church, Windfall, was received. The officers of the previous year were re-elected.

The report of the executive committee told of the illness of Elder T. M. Duncan, who had labored as missionary for two months, during which time he had preached eighty sermons, travelled 300 miles, witnessed fifty-eight conversions and had received for his services \$39.00. He had been stricken down at his labors by heart disease on January 15, 1899, a victim to overwork. W. F. Barker, laboring as a missionary in other parts of the field for part of the year, had travelled 327 miles, preached forty-one sermons, witnessed thirty-four conversions and had baptized twenty-three and organized one new church. His compensation had been \$26.14. There had been ninety-eight baptisms during the year and the total membership was 1,197.

The fourteenth annual session of the association was held with Buffalo Church, beginning on October 9, 1900. Elder P. H. Haire preached the opening sermon and twenty-six of the thirty-one churches were represented. One new church, Macedonia, was received. The officers of the previous year were re-elected. Macedonia Church, which I have just referred to, was later merged into the Old Fields Church, Corinth Church, from the New River Association, applied for admittance and was received.

A notable visitor at this session was Rev. W. R. Bradshaw of Hickory, N. C., one of the outstanding Baptist ministers of North Carolina, whose fine addresses throughout the meeting aroused great enthusiasm. At that time he was pastor at North Wilkesboro, N. C.

The executive committee reported, among other things, the following:

“We have been enabled to place Rev. J. F. Fletcher in the field for his whole time and that he shall preach two Sundays in each month at Jefferson.”

Thus did I return to the scenes of my boyhood after having been away, serving churches in the New River Association in Grayson County, Virginia, since 1890.

Mission Home Church sent up a query which indicated that some of the preachers in the association may have been preaching dangerous doctrines, disturbing to the good brethren of this church. The query was:

“What should be done with Baptist ministers who preach, practice in any way apostasy, alien immersion, open communion or any part of these doctrines?” The following answer was given:

“We, your committee, admonish that such brethren (if any in this association) that they should refrain from such preaching or practice, as we believe that such is not authorized by the Word of God, and that the first clause of the twelfth Article of the Constitution of this association be strictly complied with.”

The committee on obituaries reported that Elder E. F. Anderson, who had been a faithful and efficient minister for six years, had died during the year. A collection was taken for his widow.

Reports from the churches showed increased contributions along all lines. The total membership was 1,299 and 101 had been received by baptism during the year.

The next meeting of the association, which was the fifteenth, was held with Mountain View Church, beginning October 1, 1901. Elder W. H. Glenn preached the opening sermon and twenty-two churches were found to be represented. Elder Elihu Tucker was made moderator and H. A. Eller clerk and treasurer.

The association passed a resolution thanking Miss Fannie E. S. Heck of Raleigh, N. C., president of the Woman's Central Committee of the Baptist State Convention, for sending to Ashe County eight well trained, cultured young women for two months of teaching. These young women were placed at strategic points in the association by the executive committee and they had done fine. The Sunday schools had felt their influence particularly and they had given great impetus to the organized missionary work among women.

Reports showed that there had been a steady gain in contributions to all causes. There had been 127 baptisms during the year and the membership was 1,327. Fourteen churches reported Sunday schools with 963 pupils and teachers.

The sixteenth annual session of the Ashe Association met with Bristol Church, two miles north of Jefferson, on September 30, 1902. Elder Elihu Tucker preached the opening sermon. The officers of the preceding year were re-elected. Liberty Church, reported as having become extinct, was dropped from the rolls at this session, and Old Fields Church, from the Blue Ridge As-

sociation, was received under the watch-care of the association, pending receipt of a proper letter of dismissal.

The executive committee made report that J. F. Fletcher, associational missionary, had been continued in the field; that he had preached 138 sermons, witnessed twenty-seven conversions, baptized three, received nineteen by letter and had organized one new Sunday school. He had collected for all of the boards \$89.08.

It was reported to the association that one of the churches had received into its membership by application a preacher who had been excluded by a church of a sister association. A committee was named to visit this church and make inquiry and report back to the body. This was done, the committee finding the report to be true. The offending church was advised to rescind its action and this was done, thus maintaining good feeling and fellowship between sister associations. Sixty-nine baptisms were reported for the year and a total membership of 1,635.

The seventeenth annual session of the association convened with Corinth Church on November 10, 1903. The meeting had been postponed from September because there had been an epidemic of typhoid fever in the Corinth community. Twenty-six of the twenty-seven associations were represented and Elder Elihu Tucker was elected moderator and J. F. Fletcher clerk and treasurer. The association passed a resolution of sympathy for Elder T. M. Duncan, who was desperately ill at the time, and endorsed the work done by the associational missionary.

The association met the following year in its eighteenth annual session with Baptist Home Church on September 13, 1904. J. F. Fletcher preached the introductory sermon and the officers of the previous year were re-elected.

Much interest was shown at this session in associational missions. The executive committee reported that J. F. Fletcher had "labored effectively in the southern part of Ashe County, at Obids and Old Fields and other points; that one house of worship in this section was practically completed and another under way; that the missionary had been serving seven churches regularly and yet preaching twice a month at Jefferson." The report went on to deplore the fact that there was still much unoccupied territory and no money to develop it. Under the leadership of L. J. Sturgill, the association was stirred as never before for the cause of associational mission work and the delegates present pledged \$136.00 for the work.

The association again passed a resolution of sympathy and love for Elder T. M. Duncan, who was still very sick, expressing deep appreciation of his life and labors in the association, which was followed by a prayer service for him.

It was reported at this session that Brushy Fork Church had fallen into disorder "in that it had received into fellowship and communion one J. C. Johnson, and allowed him to officiate in her ordinances, who stands as an excluded member from Beaver Dam Church in Three Forks Association for heresy and rank disorder." In a resolution adopted concerning the church, the association went on to charge that the church had called as pastor "one James Stout, who is an excluded member from Holly Springs Church of Watauga Association," Stout having been excluded for preaching the same so-called heresy and following the same practices as Johnson.

The resolution set forth that "the Ashe Association humbly prays and exhorts the Brushy Fork Church to put from among them that heresy that can only blight their hopes of future prosperity and remain in fellowship and communion with her brethren who feel that they need their help in prosecuting the great work which God has called His people to do."

A strong committee was named to carry this message to the Brushy Fork Church and try to win the church back into ranks again, but it could not be done. Brushy Fork Church did not appear in the association again until 1907. In 1906 the Ashe Association withdrew fellowship from her. Similar trouble had arisen in Clifton Church in 1902 but action on the part of the association, as I have already related, was effective and that splendid church saw its error and frankly confessed it. The trouble in Brushy Fork had come from the two men named in the resolution, who had come into the community preaching sanctification and had disrupted church and families, causing confusion for miles around. Several preachers, both Baptists and Methodists, had been carried away with the heresy.

Only ten of the twenty-seven churches in the association reported Sunday schools this year. There had been fifty-seven baptisms and the total membership was 1,566.

The association convened the following year in its nineteenth annual session with Old Fields Church on September 5, 1905. Elder Elihu Tucker preached the introductory sermon and after twenty-six churches had answered the roll-call, the association

organized for business by re-electing the officers of the previous year. Notice was taken of the failure of Zion Hill and Meadow View churches to send delegates to the association for the last three sessions and special committees were named to visit these churches and make inquiry as to their condition.

Two notable visitors at this session were Rev. Livingston Johnson of Raleigh, corresponding secretary of the State Mission Board, and his brother, Archibald Johnson, of Thomasville, editor of *Charity and Children*, the publication of the Baptist Orphanage. These visitors gave great impetus to the cause of State missions and of the Baptist Orphanage. Pledges were made amounting to \$89.75 for State missions and \$135.00 for the orphanage and the larger part of it was paid during the session.

Corinth Church sent up the following query:

“Will the association allow a church to tax its members to pay pastor’s salary?”

The association made answer, stating that “the association has nothing to do with it. Every Baptist church has a right to manage its business to suit its own conditions.”

At this session there was reported the death of Elder T. M. Duncan and I wish to pause here long enough to set down a few facts about this good man, gleaned from his obituary which appears in the minutes of this session. His full name was Thomas Monroe Duncan, and he was born March 26, 1840. He died November 28, 1904. He was called to the ministry at the age of 43 and was ordained by a presbytery composed of J. F. Fletcher, D. W. Thomason and I. W. Thomas at old Buffalo Church, in June, 1878. The following twenty years he spent in intense, active, earnest work for God. During this time he preached 2,275 sermons, baptized 304 persons, and helped to organize three associations, the New River, the Ashe and Alleghany, and the Alleghany and Grayson. He served for three years and six months as missionary in the Ashe and Alleghany Association and two years in the Ashe Association. He is credited with organizing ten churches and forty Sunday schools and before he became a minister he was active as a deacon and Sunday school superintendent.

For forty-seven of his sixty-four years, he was a faithful member of the church, diligent in all good works. I was close to him and he to me and I know the kind of man he was. I was asso-

ciated with him in revival meetings a great deal. When I was laboring in the New River Association between 1891 and 1900, I had him with me frequently for evangelistic meetings in the various churches of my field and invariably his labors left their impress upon the churches. His work in Ashe County is his monument and it will last forever.

The Ashe Association met in its twentieth annual session with Big Laurel Church on September 25, 1906. Rev. J. F. Stanly preached the introductory sermon and letters from seventeen of the twenty-seven churches in the association were handed in and delegates enrolled. Rev. Elihu Tucker was elected moderator and M. M. Blevins clerk and treasurer.

The executive committee reported that J. F. Fletcher, missionary since 1900, had gone away and that they had secured as missionary Rev. R. L. Shoaf. They were able to secure Elder Shoaf only after considerable delay and he had gotten to work late. However, his report showed that much had been accomplished. Between April 1 and the date of the association meeting, he had preached 147 sermons, witnessed 12 conversions, baptized 17, organized one Sunday school, and collected \$70.30 for the boards.

Elder Elihu Tucker was engaged as missionary for the following year and the churches represented pledged \$106.50 for his support.

The association met the following year with Apple Grove Church, in its twenty-first annual session, on October 15, 1907. Rev. P. H. Haire preached the opening sermon and delegates from twenty-three churches were enrolled. The officers of the previous year were re-elected. One new church, Liberty Hill, was received and Brushy Fork, which had been dropped from the rolls for the reason that I have already stated, petitioned for re-instatement and was restored to fellowship.

The executive committee reported that Elder E. Tucker, the associational missionary, had done faithful and efficient work during the year. He had witnessed fifty-five conversions and had baptized thirty-one. One new church, Liberty Hill, had been organized. The delegates present pledged \$313.00 toward his support for the coming year.

There had been 112 baptisms during the year and the total membership had reached 1,621. The churches had contributed for all causes \$947.62.



REV. ELIHU TUCKER

The association pledged itself to special effort in Sunday school work and plans were laid for a county Sunday school convention to be held before the next session of the association.

The twenty-second annual meeting of the Ashe Association was held with Beaver Creek Church, beginning on September 8, 1908. Rev. W. R. Bradshaw, of Hickory, preached the introductory sermon and delegates from twenty-five churches were enrolled. The officers of the previous year were re-elected.

The work of the associational missionary, Rev. Elihu Tucker, was again approved and he was continued in the work. Reports from the churches indicated that fine progress had been made along all lines. The total membership was 1,669 and ninety-five had been added by baptism. The Sunday school convention planned the previous year, had produced splendid results. Eighteen churches reported thriving Sunday schools with 1,260 pupils and teachers.

Mention is made in the minutes of this session of the death of Capt. W. H. Gentry, for many years a Baptist leader in Ashe County. He was the son of Elder Richard Gentry and was originally a member of Old Fields Church. In 1851 he became a member of the new church organized in Jefferson and called Bethel. This church was later moved eight miles south of Jefferson. At the time of his death he was a member of the church at Jefferson. He succeeded his father as clerk of the Superior Court of Ashe County and held the place at the time of his death. He and his father together held this office for more than fifty years.

The twenty-third annual session of the Ashe Association was held with Mission Home Church, beginning October 5, 1909. Rev. W. F. Barker preached the opening sermon. Twenty-one of the thirty-one churches in the association were found to be represented by delegates and the organization was perfected by the election of Prof. J. C. Goodman as moderator, and M. M. Blevins as clerk and treasurer. One new church, Calvary, was received.

It was announced by the executive committee that Rev. Elihu Tucker, associational missionary, had been forced to resign because of failing health. During the time he had been able to work he had preached 104 sermons, made 180 religious visits, and baptized 12. He had received for his labors a total of

\$89.11. The total membership of the association was 1,714 and eighty-one had been received by baptism.

The twenty-fourth meeting of the association was held with Landmark Church and it opened on September 6, 1910. Twenty-four churches were found to be represented. The annual sermon was preached by Rev. J. T. Glenn and the association organized by re-electing the officers of the previous year.

The executive committee reported that Rev. P. H. Haire had been secured to do mission work at two points, Brushy Fork and Long Branch. It is interesting to note that Brushy Fork was still having trouble, an element of its membership still holding to the teachings of Johnson and Stout. This opposition had secured possession of the church building and had locked the others out. The courts had been resorted to for a determination of the legal rights of the contending parties and a collection was taken among the delegates to aid in the fight. Missionary Haire reported a great revival meeting at Long Branch, with forty professions of religion and fifteen additions to the church. He had received for his services during the year \$33.00. All of the churches reported 141 baptisms and a total membership of 1,831. There were eighteen Sunday schools with 1,132 students and teachers.

The association adopted a resolution calling on all churches to increase their contributions for pastors' salaries at least 50%, calling attention to the fact that their ministers could do more effective work for the Master if freed from financial worries.

The twenty-fifth annual session of the Ashe Association was held with Healing Springs Church, beginning on September 5, 1911, with the introductory sermon by Rev. George M. Reeves. When the roll was called, thirty churches were found to be represented and organization was completed by the re-election of the officers of the preceding year.

This session was marked by unusual interest in missions, particularly in associational and State missions, and pledges for these causes were made aggregating \$367.52.

The minutes contain the following entry that is of particular interest:

“Pending the adoption of the Report on Education, J. F. Fletcher and W. A. Hash, from the New River Association, presented the following resolutions which had been

adopted by the New River Association at its last session, to-wit:

“Resolved, that we ask the Ashe and Alleghany associations to join us in the establishing of one of our Home Mission Board Mountain schools at Oak Hill, Grayson County, Virginia, and that they appoint a trustee of each association to represent the work in their association.’”

Then follows an account of a discussion of the resolution, in which Walter A. Hash, W. R. Bradshaw, W. C. Fields, J. F. Fletcher and D. S. Hubbell participated, after which the following resolution was adopted:

“Resolved, First, that we, the Ashe Association, accept the proposition made by the New River Association in reference to establishing at Oak Hill one of our Home Mission Board Mountain schools;

“Second, That we pledge our hearty co-operation in this work and that we appoint a trustee at their request.”

A great deal of interest and enthusiasm was shown by the association and Prof. J. C. Goodman was named as trustee to represent the Ashe Association.

There was a fine demonstration of interest in the Baptist Orphanage, following an eloquent address by Rev. W. R. Bradshaw, of Hickory. The orphanage children were present and added much to the interest of the occasion. A cash collection of \$50.72 was taken and many pledges were made for the work.

The total membership of the association was 1,952 and 160 had been added by baptism during the year. The association had twenty ordained ministers and had paid pastors' salaries amounting to \$637.03. They had contributed to all causes, \$1,791.67. Twenty-three of the thirty-two churches in the association reported Sunday schools, with 1,524 teachers and pupils enrolled. The Meadow View Sunday School reported that two girls in their school had recited 2,170 verses of Scripture from memory. I regret that their names were not given.

The association met with Peak Valley Church in its twenty-sixth annual session on September 3, 1912. Elder P. H. Haire preached the opening sermon and twenty-four churches were found to have delegates present. The officers of the previous year were re-elected.

Corinth Church, in Grayson County, Virginia, was granted a letter of dismissal to join the New River Association and Calvary Church was advised to dissolve.

This session was marked by unusual interest in women's work. Miss Blanche Burrus, of Raleigh, N. C., was present as the representative of the organized Women's Missionary Union. The delegates to the association vacated the church building and held their meetings in the open, turning the house over to the women for their meetings. The Women's Missionary Union here organized is generally credited with being the first in the Ashe Association, but this is not true. The first that I know of was organized at Beaver Creek Church in 1901 by Miss Ivey Mitchell, of Bertie County, N. C., later Mrs. John Wyckliffe Garvey. She was one of the young women sent into Ashe County by Miss Fannie E. S. Heck, as already related herein, and she married a son of William H. Garvey of the Beaver Creek community.

The executive committee reported that Rev. George M. Reeves and Rev. C. M. Cope had been secured as missionaries and both had done good work. They had organized one new church, Orion, had witnessed 130 conversions and had baptized fifty. There had been 160 baptisms in the association during the year and the total membership was 2,154. Twenty-one churches had Sunday schools, with an enrollment of 1,673. From the minutes it appeared that the Sunday school convention organized five years before was still functioning, doing splendid work.

The twenty-seventh session convened at Obids Church on September 9, 1913, and Rev. R. M. Burkett preached the opening sermon. Thirty-three churches were represented. There was no change in the officers.

The executive committee reported that they had been able to secure Rev. George M. Reeves as missionary on a half-time basis and that he had been active, traveling over 800 miles, witnessing fifty professions of faith and baptizing twenty. He had preached eighty sermons. They had also employed for work in the northern part of Ashe County, Rev. W. J. Banks, who had delivered 218 sermons, witnessed 106 conversions, and had received into the churches in his territory 100 members.

Oak Hill Academy, the Home Mission Board school, was again endorsed by resolution and a cash donation of \$24.00 was made to it.

On September 8, 1914, the Ashe Association met in its twenty-eighth annual session at Clifton Church and Rev. T. M. Hays preached the introductory sermon. Thirty churches were found to be represented. J. C. Goodman was re-elected moderator, but M. M. Blevins, who had been clerk and treasurer for many years, declined to stand for re-election, and J. R. Jones was elected to succeed him. One new church, Glendale, was admitted.

A strong effort was made at this session to so organize the work in Ashe County as to form "fields" that would be capable of sustaining ministers, but with indifferent success. The executive committee recommended the raising of a fund of \$600 to be apportioned to these fields. There was also a strong effort to encourage the organization of Women's Missionary Societies in all of the churches.

There had been 191 baptisms during the year and the total strength of the association was 2,073. Thirty churches reported thirty-two Sunday schools, another indication of the good work being done by the Sunday School Convention.

The twenty-ninth annual session was held with Friendship Church, beginning September 7, 1915, with the introductory sermon by Rev. C. M. Cope, of the South Yadkin Association. J. C. Goodman was re-elected moderator and J. W. Duncan was elected clerk and treasurer. Twenty-nine churches were found to be represented.

Steps were taken at this meeting looking to the establishing of a Baptist church in the new town of West Jefferson and a committee was named to look into the matter.

On September 5, 1916, the thirtieth session of the association began with New River Church, Rev. W. J. Banks preaching the opening sermon. Twenty-nine of the thirty-four churches were represented. The officers of the previous year were re-elected. Two new churches, Valley Home and West Jefferson, were received and Tuckerdale Church applied for admission. A committee was named to make an investigation of the dissolution of Windfall Church and the organization of Tuckerdale. The committee found that the dissolution of the one and the organization of the other had been legal and Tuckerdale was admitted.

It was reported at this session that an effort was being made to organize a Baptist school at West Jefferson. The association did not lose interest in Oak Hill Academy and at this session

named E. C. Eller as trustee for Oak Hill, to succeed Prof. J. C. Goodman.

The reports on the various objects of the denomination were of very high order and pledges were made for all of them. I think it would be well to pay tribute here to Rev. W. R. Bradshaw, of Hickory, N. C., a frequent visitor to the Ashe Association, to whose splendid work much of the progress of Ashe Association is due. Mr. Bradshaw was a representative of the State Mission Board, but he did not confine his efforts to that branch of the work. Every cause felt his uplifting influence. There are few preachers of his eloquence in the country.

The thirty-first session of the association met with Jefferson Church on September 4, 1917. Rev. George M. Reeves preached the introductory sermon. All of the churches were represented and the association organized for business by re-electing the officers of the previous year.

One of the most interesting features of this session was the report on Sunday school work presented by Rev. J. M. Neaves. It showed twenty-four Sunday schools in the association with 124 officers and teachers and 1,559 pupils enrolled. There were 459 church members in Sunday school and the schools had raised a total of \$185.33 for all purposes.

Glendale Church sent forward a request for the ordination to the full work of the ministry of Ed O. Miller. The association appointed a presbytery consisting of George M. Reeves, Asa Brown, C. M. Cope, P. H. Haire, Elihu Tucker, George Trivett and Coy Blackburn to conduct the service and it was held on the second day of the association.

In the report of the historian it was stated that the association had contributed during the year \$1,100 for the construction of a church at West Jefferson and that a total of \$3,000.00 had been contributed toward the erection of a Baptist school at West Jefferson. This project, for which much had been hoped, did not prosper and at this session the committee having the matter in charge reported that "for lack of moral and financial aid, the school was turned over to the county and state authorities and will be run as a state high school."

There had been 112 baptisms during the year and the total membership was 2,212. A total of \$2,662.62 had been contributed to all causes.

The next meeting, which was the thirty-second, was held with Bald Mountain Church, beginning September 3, 1918. Rev. George M. Reeves again preached the introductory sermon and the officers of the previous year were re-elected.

An echo of the World War was heard at this session when the Berlin Church announced that its name had been changed to Phœnix Church. The post office near this church had been called Berlin, but it was changed to Bina, the name of Germany's capital not being particularly attractive just at that time.

The association showed renewed interest in Oak Hill Academy at this session and a collection and pledges were taken for it. Its work was commended to the churches and all were urged to give it their support. The association had contributed to all causes during the year \$2,587.02 and \$1,144.71 for pastors' salaries. There was, according to reports, \$20,035.00 worth of church property in the association. There had been 104 baptisms and the total membership was 2,042. Twenty-one churches reported Sunday schools, eight of them "evergreen," with a total enrollment of 1,391. The total contributions from the schools for the year amounted to \$239.24.

There was much discussion at this session relative to the failure of churches to send delegates to the association, seven having been reported as absent, and it was decided to appropriate a reasonable sum to arrange for revival services at all of these churches.

The thirty-third annual session of the Ashe Association, which convened with Big Flats Church on September 9, 1919, found thirty-two of the thirty-four churches present, showing that the plan had worked out well. Rev. George M. Reeves, who was at this time a pastor in Knox County, Tennessee, again preached the annual sermon and the officers of the previous year were re-elected.

At this session the Committee on Periodicals, headed by Prof. J. O. Goodman, did particularly fine work, securing forty-five subscriptions for the *Biblical Recorder* alone and many for other publications. The report on pastoral support recommended the doubling of pastors' salaries and the delegates voted almost solidly in favor of it. In this report appeared the expression, "over the top," another echo of the World War.

There was an effort made to secure the names of all the young men of the Ashe Association who had served in the World War

but this was only partially successful. From the statistics gathered, I give the following:

Members of the Ashe Association registered 256; sent to camps, 64; number who went over seas, 43; number who saw service in active sectors, 31; killed in action, 3. Those killed were Edgar Parsons, Willie Sheets and Charlie Ashley.

Reports show that there was a slight decrease in membership but in contributions the association had the best year in its history up to this time. A total of \$5,234.62 had been contributed to all causes. There was again much interest in Oak Hill Academy and \$50.15 was contributed for Lester Blevins, a ministerial student there. The Baptist \$75,000,000 Campaign got under way at this session, being ably and eloquently presented by Rev. George M. Reeves, of Knoxville, Tennessee, and Rev. W. M. Gilmore, of Raleigh, N. C.

The thirty-fourth annual session, which met with Pleasant Home Church on September 7, 1920, found interest in the \$75,000,000 campaign at white heat. This session was opened by the introductory sermon by Rev. W. E. Carlton, and the same officers were re-elected. Only one church was absent.

Prof. J. C. Goodman, who had been named as director of the \$75,000,000 campaign for the Ashe Association, reported that the Baptist State Convention had asked the Ashe Association to contribute \$6,000 toward the fund. By unanimous vote the association decided to raise \$10,000 and when the smoke had cleared away and results had been tabulated, it was found that twenty-nine churches had pledged \$10,576.00.

The churches had experienced a good year. The movement started the previous year to double pastors' salaries, had borne fruit, the amount being \$2,718.29 for the year, a little more than double the amount. There had been contributed to all causes the very respectable total of \$6,498.36. The total membership was 2,241, a net gain of 120, and 121 had been added by baptism.

The thirty-fifth session was held with Phœnix Church, beginning on September 6, 1921. Rev. T. G. Nanny preached the introductory sermon and the officers of the previous year were re-elected by acclamation. Thirty-one churches were represented and Liberty Grove, from the Three Forks Association, applied for admission and was received under the watch-care of the association.

The association again endorsed Oak Hill Academy and pledged its interest and support. There had been received by baptism 156 members and the association had made a net gain of 131. There had been satisfactory progress with pledges for the \$75,000,000 campaign and a net gain in contributions for all causes of \$3,117.22.

The next session, the thirty-sixth, convened with Bethel Church on August 31, 1922, and Rev. C. S. Blackburn preached the opening sermon. J. C. Goodman was re-elected moderator and J. W. Duncan clerk and treasurer. Thirty-three churches were represented.

I think this session is noteworthy particularly because women first made their appearances as delegates to the association. The minutes record that Miss Nora Wallace, Mrs. D. C. Severt, and Miss Emma Testerman, were present as delegates. The work of the Women's Missionary Union, the Baptist Young People's Union and the Sunbeams received much attention at this session.

It was brought to the attention of the association at this session that one of its most faithful servants had passed on to his reward, this being Rev. Elihu Tucker, who for thirty-four years had been a minister of God in the association. I have made mention of his services briefly in this chronicle as moderator of the association and as missionary. He joined Apple Grove Church in 1876. When this church dissolved he became a member of Windfall Church, which succeeded it, and when this church was removed to Tuckerdale and re-named, he remained with it and was a member of it at the time of his death.

He entered the ministry in 1888, being ordained by a presbytery composed of Rev. D. W. Thomason, Rev. Solomon Blackburn and Rev. Noah M. Blevins, and up until his physical breakdown, which came about four years before his death, there was no more active minister in North Carolina. He had a genius for friendship and for sympathetic interest in humanity and no one was more in demand in times of sorrow and affliction. As missionary, he was a prodigious worker and his zeal and energy knew no bounds. It was his work as associational missionary that broke him down and resulted in his death. He was 72 years and 10 days old at the time of his death.

The thirty-seventh annual session was held with Healing Springs Church, beginning on August 30, 1923. The introductory sermon was preached by Rev. H. T. Penry. J. C. Good-

man was re-elected moderator and W. C. Johnston was elected clerk and treasurer by acclamation, J. W. Duncan having declined to serve again because of illness in his family. J. W. Duncan, a worthy son of Rev. T. M. Duncan, mentioned frequently in this story of the Ashe Association, had served the association faithfully for many years and it was with genuine regret that his brethren witnessed his retirement from office. They passed a resolution of thanks and appreciation for his splendid service.

Thirty-three churches reported for this session and one new church, Little Helton, was received. There was quite a contest at this session for the next meeting of the association, seven churches asking for it, and after a contest marked by friendly rivalry, it was decided to meet the following year with Tuckerdale Church.

Reports from the churches showed a net gain for the year of 105, with 124 members received by baptism. The total membership was 2,402. There was a total gain in contributions of \$1,657.80. There were twenty-seven ordained ministers in the association, thirteen of whom were pastors. Twenty-eight churches reported Sunday schools with 2,147 teachers and pupils.

The association met the following year with Tuckerdale Church on August 29, 1924. Thirty-one of the thirty-eight churches in the association were represented by delegates and the organization was completed by the re-election of the officers of the previous year. Rev. T. M. Hayes preached the opening sermon.

Probably the most noteworthy happening at this session was the application of Baptist Chapel for admission to the association. This fine old church was organized in 1842 by Stephen Ross and Barton Roby and had been in existence throughout the years. It was the first distinctively missionary Baptist Church to be organized in the mountains after the so-called "Great Split" of 1838. It joined the Briar Creek Association and later went into the organization of the Jefferson Association, which was organized in 1848. When the Jefferson ceased to exist, Baptist Chapel followed her sisters into the organization of the New River Association, but because of differences with Young's Chapel Church that were at that time irreconcilable, she withdrew. These differences were not doctrinal, but arose out of other matters. Baptist Chapel joined the Mountain Union As-

sociation in the year 1876 and remained in this association up to 1924.

The total of contributions for the preceding year was \$7,625.25, over \$1,000 of which was for missions and benevolences. The total membership was 2,360, a net gain of 153.

The thirty-ninth annual session of the Ashe Association met with West Jefferson Church on August 28, 1925. Rev. Coy S. Blackburn preached the introductory sermon and twenty-eight of the thirty-eight churches answered the roll-call.

The total membership of the association, according to reports from the churches, was 2,426. Contributions for all causes had been good during the year but had fallen slightly below the record of 1924. Five women's missionary unions were reported, with a membership of forty, and total contributions of \$131.81. Twenty-eight churches reported Sunday schools with a total enrollment of 2,003.

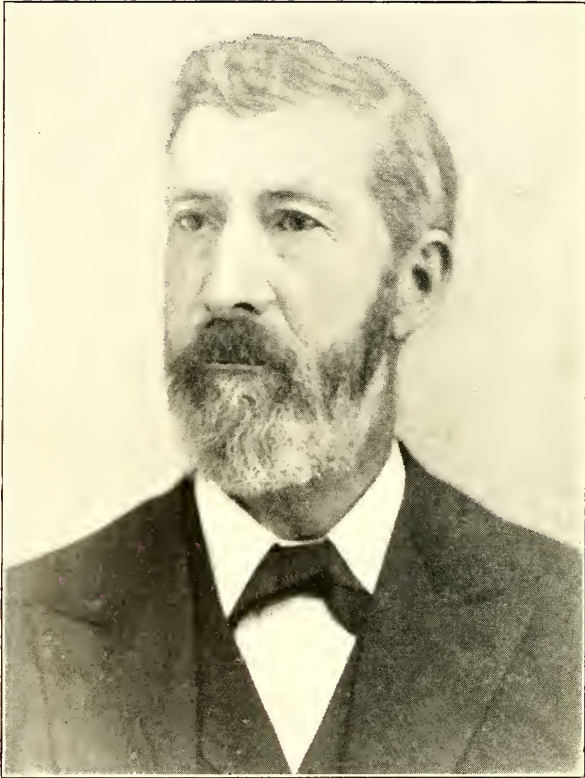
Prof. J. C. Goodman again presided as moderator and J. G. Welch served this session as clerk and treasurer.

The fortieth annual session of the association convened with Orion Church on August 27, 1926. Dr. Charles E. Maddry, of Raleigh, corresponding secretary of the State Mission Board, preached the opening sermon, following a song service conducted by Rev. W. E. Denny. Upon roll-call, thirty-one churches were found to be represented and organization was completed by the re-election of the officers of the previous year by acclamation.

Two new churches, Smethport and Pleasant Valley, applied for admission and were received under the watch-care of the association, pending investigation by a special committee headed by Ira T. Johnston.

At this session, under the leadership of Ira T. Johnston, the association decided to discontinue its old board of missions and transfer its duties to a new board to be known as the Executive Committee and Board of Missions, with a membership of five.

At this session notice was taken of the death of James Eller, for many years historian of the association and vice president of the association. Born on June 25, 1828, he lived until March 19, 1926. He joined New Hope Baptist Church in 1847, this church being in Wilkes County, and from that time until his death he was active in the work of his denomination. His wife, who was Mary Ann Carlton, and whom he married in 1849, died on August 30, 1924.



JAMES ELLER

H. A. Eller, son of James Eller, and himself a Baptist leader of note, was elected to succeed his father as vice-president of the association.

CHAPTER X.

IN CONCLUSION.

What has happened since 1926 is fresh in the minds of all. I believe that our people have been aroused to the importance of preserving the records of their churches and that there is no need for further labor on my part. The minutes of all associations, both in North Carolina and in Virginia, are being kept in fire-proof vaults and there is no reason to fear that the records of recent and future years will be lost. It is my hope to be able to present copies of this history to the Baptist headquarters of Virginia and North Carolina, because I believe it will be helpful. I have had access to records that few have seen and I have been privileged to labor for well over fifty years, shoulder to shoulder with the men and women who have made Baptist history in these mountain counties.

The task of gathering the facts for this history has been long and, at times, exceedingly exhausting. It has tried my strength many times, almost to the breaking point, but it has been a labor of love and of joy unalloyed. There has been joy in poring over old records, carefully kept in old chests and trunks in scores of mountain homes, and in searching through the membership of a dozen or more churches for a copy of the missing minutes of some year. What a wealth of happy memories this labor has revived!

I wish I had the words to tell you here, so that you could see and feel and know the happiness that came to me in the process.

If you are interested enough to peruse my dull pages, the names that I have herein recorded may be just names to you and nothing more. To me they were, and are, personalities, even Richard Jacks and Stephen Ross, and those other stalwarts of the early days whom I never saw, while those with whom I was privileged to serve—Elihu Tucker, T. M. Duncan, E. Blevins, T. M. Honeycutt, Solomon Blackburn, Franklin Barker, W. W. White, and a host of others now gone, lived and moved again and wrought mightily before my eyes in the records that I labored over, and while I may not have written a moving story of their achievements in these pages, it has not been for lack of love for them and appreciation on my part. I have done the best I could.

For this history I claim no great literary merit but I believe it to be accurate. I know that I have garnered from hundreds of obscure sources, all unknown to the average historian, many fragments of history that might have been lost but for my humble efforts and if the completed story, as it is set down here, proves interesting to those who love the Baptist cause and helpful to students and historians of the future, my labor will not have been in vain and I will be more than satisfied.

I write this closing paragraph at Oak Hill Academy, our great Baptist school at Kindrick, in Grayson County, Virginia, where I have been laboring since 1925, working with and for a host of fine mountain boys and girls who compose the student body and serving as their pastor and the pastor of Young's Chapel Baptist Church.

Oh, it is great to be living anywhere in these momentous times, but how great it is to be living here in God's own lovely mountains, surrounded by those I love and who love me! More than forty years ago I became pastor of this church. My pastorate has not been continuous but my love for it has been continuous, ever-increasing and overflowing. The years go by and strength ebbs away, but the heart stays young and so does my mind. I think this comes, more than from anything else, from the happy circumstance that I have had the joy of watching over these children of my soul for forty years, or more. Under my poor ministry young men and young women, boys and girls, are entering the church today, even as their fathers and mothers and their grand-parents entered the church before them, all under my ministry. Somehow, the spectacle serves to renew my youth and preserve my faith in human beings. Why? Because I, in my brief span of life, have seen, with my own eyes, how the religion of Jesus Christ can permeate and sustain a community from generation to generation.

Truly, God has been good to me.

[T H E E N D]

Kindrick, Va., May 1, 1933.





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